

HESTER
STANLEY
AT
ST. MARKS



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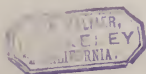
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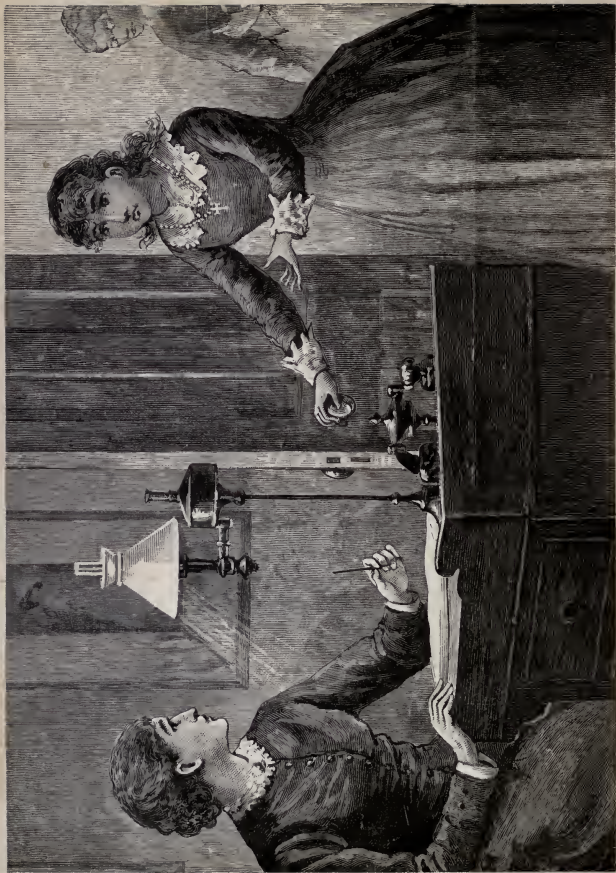
From U. C. -

Berkeley, Cal.

30th Nov. 1882.

X.





"‘I wish to ask you,’ she exclaimed breathlessly.” — PAGE 11.

HESTER STANLEY

AT

ST. MARKS.

BY

HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD,

AUTHOR OF "THE MARQUIS OF CARABAS," "THE AMBER GODS," ETC.

With Illustrations.



BOSTON:

ROBERTS BROTHERS.

1882

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BY ROBERTS BROTHERS.

UNIVERSITY PRESS:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE.

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HESTER STANLEY AT ST. MARKS.

CHAPTER I.

IT was recreation in the great school-room at Waterways, during the gloomy sunset-hour, when books and pencils were thrown by, and the girls were left to their own wills by the tired teachers, as glad as they of the intermission.

The girls — a thousand pardons, the young ladies — were improving the hour; these in locked embrace sauntering up and down the open space; those in coteries discussing some tremendous secret; others amusing themselves with the black-boards and crayons, and the rest busy with romping games.

All were thus occupied but one, — a dark little body in a black gown, who sat alone in the big bay-window that overlooked the harbor, and

watched a long, low steamer that through the rain and mist was ploughing out to sea.

It was Hester Stanley, thinking of her father, — in just such a steamer, maybe, — on his way to cross the continent and take passage for an Australasian port. From this port he expected to sail to the islands from whence he came, — her father, who was all she had, whom she adored, and whom she might not see again, as he had jestingly said, till Miss Marks was done with her.

As the last outline of the steamer and its black plumes disappeared, the little hands, that had been nervously folding and unfolding while they lay in her lap, suddenly hid her face, and all the slender frame shook with a storm of sobs that she vainly endeavored to suppress.

In the midst of them a hand was laid upon her shoulder. "I would n't," said a voice in her ear.

She started ; started just enough to make room for another girl to sit beside her — a tall, red-haired, good-natured-looking girl, who tilted back Hester's chin on the tip of her finger till she could survey the tear-stained face, and then deliberately

took her handkerchief and wiped away the fresh gush of tears.

"Come," said she, "I've been there. I know all about it. There's nothing in the world so bad as homesickness, and nothing half so silly. What's the use? They're having a beautiful time at home this minute, without a thought of us. The lamps are just brought in, and they are going to have hot muffins for tea, and they're not even wishing we had one."

"I'm not homesick," said Hester.

"Not homesick! You'd better! Not homesick in this pandemonium, as Miss Brown calls it, this place of yelling girls, without a centre-table, without a rocking-chair, without —"

"I'm not homesick!" exclaimed Hester, with a fresh burst of tears. "I never had a home."

"Never had a home?"

"Not what *you* call a home."

"Why, what sort of a country did you come from?"

"I never even had a country."

"What, no home, no country! What in the world did you have?"

"My father!" cried Hester. "And now I've lost him. And I shan't see him for years, if I ever do."

"If you ever do! I like that. What's to hinder, please? He was alive the last four years, so he's just as likely to be the next four. And as for you, if you're not alive, you'll never know it, so what odds does it make? That's what I call intellectual philosophy; and when I don't have my lesson, I put some such poser to Miss Brown, and it takes her so long to show me my error, that the time's up before she finds out I have n't opened the book. Oh, you think that's wrong, do you?"

"I—I—you know—if papa puts me here to learn, and I come, and I don't learn, I—I—"

"Feel like a swindle. So do I. And I always mean never to do it again—till next time. So you're going to be a little bookworm?"

"I *must* study. Papa means me to be a teacher out there, where they need them, and I can do them good."

"Oh dear me! *You* do good,—you who need somebody to do good to you? Where is 'out there'?"

"In the South Sea Islands, you know, where I was born —"

"Where you were born? Dear, dear! are you an African or an Asian or —"

"I suppose I'm a Polynesian," said Hester, half laughing. "I'm dark enough, you see, — I'm so tanned. But papa is an American. He is a great merchant there. He has ships coming and going. His name is Stanley, — I am Hester Stanley."

"And I am Marcia Meyer, — an 'incorrigible girl,' Miss Brown will tell you. She struggles with her *r's*."

"I shan't believe her," said Hester, brightening.

"Don't you. I'm as good as the general run. And I should n't wonder if we were great friends. What are you going to study?"

"Everything. I don't know anything. I've never been at school, you know. That is, only a little, now and then, when I felt like it, at the nuns' school. You won't want me for a friend when you find out what a dunce I am."

"Shan't I? You'll want me — all the more. Are you a dunce about everything?"

"Yes,—I guess so. All I can do is to dance, and embroider, and play on the guitar, and sing, and —"

"On the guitar?" cried Marcia. "Have you got one? Here? Oh, do play on it right away!"

"I can't. It's with my luggage, and I don't know where that is."

"I'll find out. I don't believe they'll take that away from you. They would if it was candy. And we do as we please in recreation. I'll get it; the servants and I are great chums."

Marcia whisked out of the room, and just as Hester was relapsing into gloom, she reappeared with the little instrument, which Hester swiftly and deftly tuned, and then sent the notes of a fandango ringing through the room.

For a moment the silence of surprise filled the place; and then Marcia, with her arms arched above her head, as if playing invisible castanets, was dancing like a girl in the tarantella; and directly afterward the whole amazed congregation of girls were clasped in each other's arms and whirling in a waltz, in the midst of which the doors opened, and Miss Marks and Miss Parks

and Miss Brown and Madame Cherdidi stood witnesses of the scene.

"Tableau!" cried Marcia. And at the word every girl paused, suspended in the attitude in which the command found her.

"Fine exercise for a rainy night," said Miss Marks pleasantly. "And now the study-bell will strike."

In two minutes the lamps were lit, and there was silence save for the hum of study in the room, and Marcia's voice expostulating in an undertone at Miss Brown's desk,—discipline being but slight during this one hour,— "Indeed, indeed, it was all my remissness."

"I have no doubt it was your wemissness, whatever it was," Hester could hear replied. "But, as it happens, there was no wemissness about it. I am glad the young ladies were no worse employed, and that Miss Stanley has so soon wecovered fwom the loss of her pawent."

"She has n't, Miss Brown; she has n't. I got the guitar and brought it to her on purpose to make her forget —"

"Humph!" said Miss Brown. "I was told the

child was disconsolate, and I find her playing dances like a Scotch fiddler. I don't think she's sufferwing. No, I shall not gwant the wequest. She will follow the wegular woutine of the last comer,—the last bed in the dormitowy, the last desk on the floor,—and must win places more advanced by her efforts."

"But, Miss Brown—"

"Wun to your seat, Miss Meyer; you are wasting time."

Hester guessed that Marcia had been begging for her a place near herself in the dormitory, at table, and elsewhere. Disappointment at the refusal, and the smart from Miss Brown's sarcastic tone, in her rather sore condition, acted like a searing-iron on a blood-vessel, and from that moment shut and sealed her emotions in great measure, and made her nothing but a machine, so far as Miss Brown was concerned. When that lady appeared and questioned her as to her past studies, she let her know in bare monosyllables the dunce she was.

"I never knew such ignowance!" Miss Brown said, half to herself. "The girl has been shame-

fully neglected." And at this implied reproach upon her father, Hester blazed out.

"Where is Miss Marks?" she cried. "I wish to see the Principal of this place! I wish to know if she allows her scholars to be insulted!" — to the tune of a titter from the girls, with whom Miss Brown was no favorite.

Wrenching her arm from Miss Brown's grasp, Hester darted across the room towards the door through which she had seen Miss Marks disappear, and breaking in on that lady, —

"I wish to ask you," she exclaimed breathlessly "if you allow your servants to insult your scholars and their parents? It is true that I am ignorant. I should not have come here to learn if I were not. But my father has *never* neglected me, and she has no right to say so; he is the best, the dearest —"

And then she was on the floor, in a heap at Miss Marks's feet, crying again like a tempest. Miss Marks raised her from the floor and smoothed her hair, till the first vehemence of the tears had subsided. It was not the moment for severity.

"My dear," she said then, when she could be heard, "I am not going to correct you for breaking

rules and disturbing the discipline, because I am sure you do not know you are doing so; but I must insist on your begging Miss Brown's pardon, not only for your manner towards her, but for styling her my servant — ”

“Why, she *is* your servant, is n't she?” asked Hester, looking up with the tears glittering on her dark skin and in her dark eyes. “You are her employer, her mistress — she obeys you?”

“So will you obey me, I hope. Does that make you my servant?”

“Why, no,” said Hester slowly. “I suppose,” she added, “that, speaking the truth, you are my servant.”

Miss Marks smiled, notwithstanding her perplexity over this apparently new specimen among children.

“What a little heathen it is!” she said to Madame Cherdidi, who was correcting exercises not far away.

“I understand French!” cried Hester, on her feet, and confronting Miss Marks. “I am not a heathen. I am a good Christian, and was confirmed not a month ago!”

"Do you think you are conducting like a Christian now?" asked Miss Marks.

Hester was silent a minute or two; and then as she looked up, she said with deliberation, —

"I am really a greater dunce than I thought I was. I understand nothing, it seems. I certainly do not understand why, when my father employs you, and your — your — your Miss Browns, to teach me, that you all act as if you were my superiors, and had authority over me, — over me, who am the mistress of a hundred servants!"

"That is it exactly!" said Miss Marks, perceiving that the child really meant no insolence, but was puzzled by a state of things which she had never seen, and of which she had never heard. "We *are* your superiors, and we have authority over you. We should be your superiors if it were only for the fact of the vast difference between our knowledge and your ignorance; because, in America, education and knowledge are what constitute superiority. But since you have been left with me, I stand exactly in the place of your father. All his authority over you he has given to me; and a part of mine I delegate, I give to the

other teachers, whose duty it is to use it. Therefore," said Miss Marks, "I expect you to obey them and me, as you would your father, and by-and-by, perhaps, to love us in some similar degree."

Hester stood with her hands folded, and her eyes on the floor awhile. "I don't suppose," she said, "that I shall ever love anybody here very much, unless it is that girl with the red hair. But if it is true that you stand in the place of my father, I will certainly obey you."

"Very well," said Miss Marks, "that is all I ask at present. Now —"

"Except," added Hester, slowly "when you may forbid me to do right, or command me to do wrong."

"And who is to be the judge of that?"

"I am, of course," replied Hester.

Miss Marks hesitated. It did not seem easy to let this pass. "Now go and beg Miss Brown's pardon for your rudeness," she said presently, deciding that enough had been said for the time, and willing to postpone the task she saw before her.

She then led the child back to the school-room

door, to experience a certain amazed amusement, as Hester, standing before Miss Brown, looked her over calmly from head to foot, and said, in perfect good faith, the whole school hearing her as well, —

“I am sorry that you obliged me to speak to you as I did, Miss Brown. But as Miss Marks says you were only doing your duty, I am willing to overlook it.”

Miss Brown would, perhaps, have been more than human if at that she had not taken Hester by the shoulder and given her a good shaking.

“How dare you touch me? Take your hands off me!” roared Hester. “You are not standing in my father’s place when you do that! He never took such a liberty with me!”

“What sort of a little twopical tiger is this, Miss Marks?” cried poor Miss Brown in desperation.

“I am afraid I shall have to take her under my own charge, Miss Brown,” responded Miss Marks, with a tone of voice that showed her disapproval of Miss Brown’s action, although she might have disliked to speak of it before the school. “She has not yet learned our ways; some day she will

understand them better, and till then we must have patience."

"Do you let such a thing go without reproof?" asked Hester of Miss Marks. "The half-naked savage women of the Islands do not strike even their captives. She must be a very vulgar woman to attempt such an indignity. She is a coward too, for I am not half her size!" And then Miss Marks hurried her away from the scene, and took her where it was to be hoped she dealt with her.

Of course, such unprecedented behavior made something of a disturbance in the school-room; although, as before mentioned, there was a good deal of liberty allowed the hour. But at length the inexorable toll of the quarter on the clock struck more terror to the hearts of the gigglers than all of Miss Brown's threats, and the buzz and hum of memorizing alone broke the hush.

Meanwhile Miss Marks, in her sitting-room, was delving into the ignorance of Hester, and discovering that although she played on the guitar and spoke French and worked lace, as the nuns had taught her, with the daughters of the half-clad Polynesian princes, she could read only with great

hesitation, and knew nothing else from books, not even that the world was round.

"It is really lamentable," said Miss Marks. "I will tell you frankly, Hester, that if the young ladies were aware of it, it is you, and not Miss Brown, at whom they would be laughing."

"I? Why should they laugh at me? Can they talk in French, in English, and in Tahitan? Can they do pillow-lace and bobbin —"

"They can do things to which all that is play. They can describe to you the globe on which you live; they know the history of all its people and all its rulers, the habits of its animals and its plants. They can call the stars by name and tell you the laws by which the Creator sent them rolling into space. Some of them are studying the works of great writers of books; some of them can tell you the story of the earth itself, before men came to live on it; some of them can find out with figures on their slates when eclipses are coming —"

"Oh Miss Marks!" cried Hester, with clasped hands, appalled by the array of the young ladies' learning, which, it must be confessed, Miss Marks

put forward on its best foot. "And I can hardly read!"

"But they were able to do little more when I first saw them. And you came to learn these very things. If you obey the teachers, you cannot help doing so. And I think you will. Now I am going to do what I have never done before,—hear your lessons myself till you have reached a point where you will not be mortified before the other young ladies."

All at once, partially realizing what it was that Miss Marks was doing for her, Hester seized both the hands of that lady and covered them with kisses.

And although she went to sleep crying that night, with the sense of her loneliness and her ignorance, she bent herself to her books from that moment, as if she were working to some great end, and won by degrees the good will of all in authority, at any rate, except Miss Brown, who remained implacable.

"Sly," said Miss Brown. "And I had wather she'd be a gweater dunce than she is, than a wogue."

CHAPTER II.

FOR some time after this Miss Marks kept Hester with herself the greater part of the day, and she saw but little of Marcia, while her teacher patiently explained to her all those beginnings of knowledge whose absence might have shamed her if exposed.

In those early days when Hester was exploring the fearful mystery of the reason for carrying ten, she little thought of the time, although her efforts were directed towards nothing else, when, owing to Miss Marks's determination, she would carry back to her Islands not only a thorough education in books, but in all the arts of the kitchen, the scissors, and the needle. But much of that came about in the long summer vacations, when the other girls went to their homes, and she was left alone with Miss Marks and the servants.

In one light Hester was not altogether, it might

be said, a new experience to Miss Marks. In her own young days this lady had dreamed of leading the same life that fate seemed to have marked out for Hester's future, and had longed to help forward the race in obscure corners of the earth; but circumstances had led her to sacrifice her wish, and she had found as useful a lot at home. Yet, owing to that old dream of hers, she felt a peculiar interest in Hester, as if she had her own youth and childhood back again in her.

But even if she had recalled no memories, the little melancholy figure, and the longing face, looking out on the dreary winter scene which must have seemed to her like the death of all things pleasant, could not have done anything but touch her heart.

Yet the winter was not long on that south shore of New England, whose winds blow over the Gulf Stream, and where there is little snow; and with the coming of spring Hester began to mingle more with the girls and share some of the public recitations.

That little May Roberts and Maud Smith should be in advance of her was something she

could not endure ; and she often timidly asked Marcia to hear one lesson before the time, in order to surprise Miss Marks with a double lesson, until at last she had passed those little people, and began to feel as if she were really on the road toward graduation.

But, with all her industry and earnestness, she was perpetually doing something that startled those about her. For, without any mother, surrounded since her birth by servants who were virtually slaves, and left in their hands a good deal by her father, who had to be absent about his business, she was untamed and undisciplined ; and her tempers and impulses were always bursting up like flames through volcanic soil. If she ever should acquire a mastery over them, Miss Marks felt that it would be a greater victory than any of the other scholars — who had been trained from their cradles to a certain degree of self-control — could achieve ; and seeing that punishments arousing resentment and anger would not answer with Hester, she took particular pains to address her reason.

Meanwhile, having outstripped Maud, Hester

felt a vast pleasure in occasionally hearing her little lesson. She was exceedingly severe with her, but, when the task was done, she half smothered her with caresses. She was something to love without restraint; while Miss Marks wore a halo that made love more like worship, and Marcia was, after all, a part of those superior beings — the girls of the advanced classes — that one looked up to even if allowed to revolve around them like satellites. "If I had had a little sister I should have loved her just as I love you," said Hester.

"I have a sister," said Maud, "but she is ever so old, — oh, very old, — as much as twenty-five, and married! She is sick, and that is the reason I am here. But I think I like to be here best. I think, I am not sure, — do you believe it is wrong? — I think I love Miss Marks the most. Sometimes, when I am half asleep and she comes in and stands by my bed a moment, I think she is my guardian angel —"

"I know she is mine!" cried Hester.

"And when I look at her, and she sings in devotions, I think of that in the Bible where it says, 'I say unto you that in heaven their angels

do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven,' or something like that. What do you suppose heaven is like, Hester? What do you suppose they do there? I think of it a great deal nights when I lie awake. You know," said the little thing timidly, "my mother is there."

"And your dear father, too," said Hester, to whom a father meant a great deal, now that her own father was her sole family possession. "Miss Marks says that if we try to make people happy we shall be growing fit for heaven, so I suppose that is what they do there."

"What if—I mean—of course you are trying, Hester," said little Maud, with a blush mounting her innocent forehead, "but what if we try harder?"

"I know. I did n't mean to make that mouth at Miss Brown to-day. My mouth just twisted round, she was so—so—and then she shook me. But I did n't blame her, because I should have liked to shake *her*. You don't know what hard work it is to be good, Maud. And it's a shame that anybody like Miss Brown should be here just on purpose to make folks have bad passions!"

"Miss Brown has a good deal of trouble, I've heard them say, and it makes her nervous," said little Maud. "My sister's nervous. And then, she did n't have Miss Marks when she was young. We ought to pity her. If she had had Miss Marks —"

"She'd be gentler. Perhaps she can't help it, then. Poor thing!" said Hester, in one of her sudden bursts of repentance. "Do you suppose she would like it if we named our rose-tree for her?"

"I will give her our first forget-me-nots, too," said Maud. "I love poor Miss Brown. She means to help us — Oh! There she is! You don't suppose she heard?"

Whatever the children supposed, Miss Brown *had* heard; and the girl who disliked her most of all, Charlotte Risley, let us say, or Margaret Payson, — for Miss Brown's impartial enmity bore as severely on Margaret's airs and graces as on Charlotte's mischief, — the girl who most disliked her would have been sorry to see her wetting her pillow with salt tears that night, and perhaps glad to hear her resolution and her prayers for

patience with the most exasperating set of girls that ever tormented a person designed to make almanacs and obliged to shepherd sheep.

For a little while the poor teacher was more subdued than the oldest inhabitant could remember having seen her; and that, as Marcia said, was certainly Marcia herself, as she had been at Waterways since time began, and was likely to be there till time was done, before she knew enough to graduate. It was the next day that Miss Brown gave Hester and Maud some flower-seeds, and even went out with them one evening to show them how to sow the seeds that they might come up with their colors in the pattern of East Indian embroidery, giving them a charming talk the while from her stores of knowledge — and she really had stores — about the weaving and working done by those dark people underneath the sun, whose eyesight is so delicate that they are said to see more colors and combinations of colors than we do, and who are so fond of their strong, sweet patchouli scents that all their fabrics shed them on the air.

But this frame of mind was too tender and

unused to stand any severe shocks, and there were always miscreants enough to disturb it. In no great while Hester herself was so unfortunate as most unwittingly to lay herself open to Miss Brown's reproaches.

It was during the Wednesday morning exercise, when, for an hour, — the whole school being assembled, — general questions were answered by those of whom they were asked indiscriminately, whether in the higher or lower classes. Miss Brown had drawn upon the blackboard a large truncated cone, and over it had written the words, Brown Bread. "Now," she said, "I am going to cut this loaf. Which portion would you wather have, — a tenth or a hundwedth? Hester, you may answer."

And Hester quietly answered, "A hundredth."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Miss Brown, — "is it possible that, after all my dwilling, any one can be so ignowant! Even little May Woberts knows better than that. You may stand in the corner with your back to the school till I call you. May, you will answer the question now. Which portion of this loaf would you pwefer to

have, when it is divided, one-tenth or one-hundredth ? ”

Forewarned was forearmed, and of course May replied that she would prefer one-tenth, and received a good mark for her wisdom ; after which the exercise went on according to its own impartial fashion, and at its conclusion Hester was told to turn round and explain by what hidden process of the mind she came to the decision that a hundredth was more than a tenth.

“ I don’t think so,” said Hester, with her big eyes all suffused.

“ You don’t ? I don’t suppose you do, after May has taught you better. But, before that, what was the reason you thought so ? Is it that to greedy eyes a hundred looks more than ten ? ”

“ No, Miss Brown,” said Hester, trying hard to keep cool. “ I beg your pardon, but you did n’t ask me which was the greater, a tenth or a hundredth. You asked me which I would rather have of that loaf of brown bread, and I said a hundredth ; and I would. For I — I don’t like brown bread.”

Miss Brown was silent a moment with indig-

nant surprise, and a laugh ran through the whole room like a rustle of leaves. "I might have known better," said Miss Brown, then, with bitter severity, "than to suppose I was mistaken in you in the first place. You may spend the west of the morning in the libwawy, and you may learn the ninth line of the multiplication table before you come out! I never saw such bwazen insolence in all my expewience."

"It is not insolence, Miss Brown," said Hester. "I never meant —"

"Don't you contwadiet me!" returned Miss Brown. "I don't know what you meant; I know what you did. And I say it was insolence —"

"It was not," said Hester firmly. And if the monitor's bell, calling new recitations, had not sounded, nobody knows where the thing would have ended.

When, on the next day, Miss Brown was subjected to a course of Charlotte Risley's peculiarly trying pertness, the whole disturbance of her nervous circulation became something beyond endurance; and happening, while in that frame, to pass down the garden, she saw that the seeds had refused

to sprout in their order, or give much evidence of having been planted at all. Vexed in soul at not being able, in addition to her other annoyances, to bring her gardening to a successful issue, her eyes fell on Hester occupied in exploring the earth with her fingers in search of the reluctant seeds. With her old habit of suspicion it rushed over her poor excited apprehensions that Hester was trying to thwart her intentions about that flower-bed which was to look like an India shawl, and in the first impulse of resentment she seized a garden-rake and stirred up the bed in a manner to settle the question of the seeds forever. Angry with herself, and twice angry with Hester for making her angry with herself, she lost no time in restoring Hester to her previous place in her poor opinion.

Of course both Maud and Hester shed tears over the ruins. "I will never name another rose-tree for her!" sobbed Hester. "I—I hope this one will have thorns like needles!"

"I don't want to hurt the rose-tree because Miss Brown has a naughty temper," sobbed Maud in return. "I suppose she can't help herself; she didn't begin in time. Just see how naughty her

being naughty makes us. I—I—stamped my foot at her!”

“*I* wished she was dead!”

“Oh, Hester, Hester, you did n’t know what it is to wish she was dead!”

“It’s to wish her away from here!”

“But it’s like killing,—such a wish is,” gasped Maud.

“I know it. It’s her fault. She made me.”

“You put her out by contradicting her,” said Maud courageously.

“I had to contradict her,” said Hester seriously. “And just see how bad she is, to make me wish such a horrid thing! I wish *I* was. But then she always says to me, ‘What if you should die in your sleep? Do you think you are fit to stand before God?’”

“We are standing before God now,” said Maud, the tears glittering still on her eyes like dew on great blue flowers. “Miss Marks says so. He sees us just as much here as he would in heaven. But, oh Hester, you must promise me never to do anything you would n’t want to have him see you do! For I am going to try—I promised Miss

Marks I would ; and oh, how dreadful," — with fresh tears, — " it would be — if I should — go to heaven and not find you there !"

Hester, too, burst into tears again with the misery of the thought. " It won't be any use trying," she sobbed. " She will make me wicked again to-morrow. But of course — of course I promise you." And, ignorant of the origin of the action, they crossed their forefingers, — the little brown one and the little white one, — to mark the compact, and kissed across them before they strolled away with their arms round each other's necks. " I am glad my wish can't hurt her, though," said Hester. " But when my father comes I shall certainly tell him all about her !" With which fearful threat Hester's thoughts reverted to the flowers that were never to bloom. " I wanted to see our fraxinella shine by night," she said.

" And the canary-bird flowers," answered Maud. " Marcia said that when they were full blown they would spread their wings and fly away. I wanted to see them fly !" And Maud was not entirely consoled till her sister sent for her to come home for a few days and celebrate some festival there.

Little Maud was not very well when she came back, and her condition made her perhaps more than usually sympathetic with their ailing kitten, which Hester was nursing now, and with which they had great enjoyment together. It was not a very pretty little cat, but that was in its favor so far as their tender compassions were concerned. Fortified by Maud's affection for it, it became, in its illness, an object of greater importance than before to Hester, who, feeling herself unable to part with it, took it into class-room only to have it seized by Miss Brown and flung out the window. White with horror, Hester was after it in a moment, — to no avail; and at the end of a long search, which led them across the garden and into a swamp, out of which they had difficulty in wading, little Maud and she went to bed with sore throats, and Maud fairly cried herself ill, if she was not already so.

Maud was worse next day, with symptoms that caused the doctor to order her to be separated from the rest of the school, fearing contagion. The child, who had spent lately a couple of nights at her sister's, where they had what afterwards

proved to be diphtheria, had possibly, he said, caught it there.

Hester, who tried to follow her into the distant room, was turned back and forbidden to enter that upper hall again. But one might as well have forbidden the wind to blow. Hester felt a kinship with the little fatherless and motherless Maud; and every time she thought of her, sick and on her pillow, she would start up, and if she could, would run for that room, although only to be intercepted on the way.

"I—I can't help it," she said, when one of the nurses found her. "They're all I have, and they're both in there." For Miss Marks had scarcely left the child since she had been taken ill. But, indignant with her next and less gentle repulse, she stamped her foot and cried, "Nobôdy has a right to forbid me! I did not promise to obey servants! Servants cannot represent my father! I promised to obey when it was right. But Maud wants me,—I know she wants me; it is right I should go, and I will! When I say I will go, I will!"

"Perhaps you will," said Miss Brown, taking

hold of her and shaking her till her teeth chattered. "But it's the law that no young lady mounts that staircase, and I don't *think* you will."

But when, on the second twilight, a rumor went through the school — which, as the disease had not originated in the place, the doctor did not think it best yet to scatter — that little Maud would not live, a wilderness of Miss Browns could not have kept Hester away.

She lay for hours that night with her eyes wide open and her heart shaking her from head to foot; and, just as the dawn was gray, she left her bed and stole, barefooted and shivering, from alcove to alcove, past the sleeping watch-dog of a Madame Cherdidi, who alternated weeks in the dormitory with Miss Brown, and through the long halls, and up the distant flights of stairs, to the door that had been barred against her. She softly turned the handle and peered in.

It was a chamber looking to the east, and the sunrise was just sending one long golden shaft through the window. It fell on Miss Marks and on the bed beside which she was standing; and



"She softly turned the handle and peered in. Hester never forgot the vision it gave her."—PAGE 34.

Hester never forgot the vision it gave her, — the vision of that little frost-sealed face, with its soft hair about it, like that of some heavenward-floating cherub, and Miss Marks standing there, pale with her watching and care, and with such a sweet and solemn smile upon her lips, — seeming to Hester's gaze like the great, white, carved angel she had once seen in a church before she reached Waterways.

"I thought, oh, I thought she wanted me!" sobbed Hester. "But I see she couldn't have wanted me while she had you! And now she wants nobody!"

Some time after this, when things had taken their usual course again, when the disinfecting was all done, and no second case had occurred, Miss Marks made her only reference to Hester's disobedience in mounting the stairs.

She had taken a number of the girls, on a brilliant starlight night, to point out to them the constellations. In the winter she had shown them that hunter of the heavens, Orion, with his sword and belt and shield,

"Made tremulously out in hoary flame,"

and Sirius, his great hound ; the swarm of Pleiades and those stars that make the face of the bull which Orion hunts, the rainy Hyades that "vex the dim seas." Now she showed them Lyra, like a great sapphire in the very key-stone of the arch of night ; Antares burning in the heart of the Scorpion ; the Northern Cross, as beautiful as the Southern if not so glorious ; and, where Boötes chases the Bear with his hunting-dogs, Arcturus, not far beneath the Northern Crown, and the lonely star of Charles's Heart ; the calm glitter of Altair in the Eagle ; Cassiopeia on her jewelled throne-chair ; and a great, yellow, unwinking planet.

"Hester," said Miss Marks, walking back to the house alone with her, "I suppose you would call that an exercise in astronomy. What if you called it an exercise in obedience, — obedience to the laws of this school, which, perhaps, you do not yet regard quite as you should ? All those great worlds, those stars that you have seen moving overhead to-night, obey law, — the law that sends them on their way. If every star set up its own opinion of what it is best to do, do you think there

would be anything but shooting stars to be seen? Our Lord himself is law; and law obeys itself, for it never varies. Do you know of any reason why you also should not obey law?"

And if Hester did not altogether understand the words, at the time, she did the spirit, and for a long while it seemed to her as if, between little Maud and the stars, she had looked some way into heaven.

CHAPTER III.

IF Miss Marks did not find it expedient to make comment upon all the small affairs of the school, she did not allow so important a matter as the health of any of the girls to escape her observation ; and after little Maud's death she thought it decidedly best that Hester should have a change of scene. The result, then, of some whispered consultations and a brief correspondence by post, was that Hester was sent with Marcia to pass a short time at the latter's home, and to accustom herself there to new ideas which might efface the depressing influence of her last experience.

"Just think, Hester, what a good turn you are doing me ! I am going to have the responsibility of your care, — St. Marks says it may develop my character, and Brownie says there's no need of hurrying that, — and we are going to see mamma and Rafe, my darling Rafe ! What do you think of that ?"

But Hester had hardly time to think, let alone to say what she thought, before she found herself on her way; and it was but a few hours before she was looking about her as she stood in the outskirts of a large town, and on the doorstep of an old-fashioned country-house, the red roofs gleaming among lofty elms full of building birds and late afternoon sunbeams, and the greensward at her feet strewn with hoops and bats and balls and grace-sticks and dolls.

The next moment there was a rush and scamper, and half a dozen — or was it a dozen? — little Meyers of every size and description were running through the hall, and all but rising out of the ground, to throw their arms about Marcia's neck with exclamations of joy.

"Oh Marcia dear, I'm so glad you've come! I want you so to hurry right away and mend —"

"Oh Marcia, father's bought a new hay-field, and there are meadow-larks' nests in it. You'll go look for them with me, won't you?"

"Oh Marcia, this is my new Dinah, and you will make a gown for her —"

"Oh Marcia darling, are you going to stay? It's been so lonesome without you!"

And then, suddenly, they saw the little stranger, and put their thumbs into their mouths and retreated, while Marcia cried, "Yes, yes, yes, to all of you! And this is Hester, and she will help us so! And, Hester, this is Rosy, and Helen, and John, and Bert, and Agnes, and Mabel. And now for mamma; and where is Rafe?"

"Oh Marcia! Did n't you know about the new baby?"

"A new baby! Well, I should think somebody might have written!"

"Why, we could n't. And new babies always do seem to come at such inconvenient times, when mamma is sick. But it's seven weeks old now, Marcia, and it's got a dimple —"

"And oh Marcia, what do you think? Mamma had all her teeth out yesterday, and is going to have some new ones —"

"There, that's enough! Come along, Hester!" And, running up-stairs and the length of the hall, Marcia tapped at a door and opened it, and Hester was pushed by her into a large, pleasant room, full of rose-colored chintz and confusion, where a lady sat in a reclining chair, her face tied up in a white

handkerchief, and just at hand an atom of a baby in a basket, up the side of which a little two-year-old was climbing and jealously peering, while on a lounge under the window lay a lad of some twelve summers, who looked at her with eyes that seemed to Hester shining from a perfectly seraphic face. She had no time to observe farther, for Marcia was calling out, "This is mamma, Hester, — my dear, poor, sweet mamma! You kiss her on that side and I'll kiss her on this! And is this the new baby? Oh, isn't it a dear? I love it already, don't you? And, Hester, look, look, it's really smiling! Oh, Rafe, Rafe, my dear boy, to think you're there still! My dear, dear boy!" And Marcia was half smothering the lad in kisses, while Hester was still kneeling by the little rose-lined basket, and adoring with a forgetful worship the first white baby she had ever seen.

"There, there, Marcia, that will do," said the lady with the muffled mouth. "It is so good that you could come, my child. Perhaps now you will help me reduce this part of the world to order."

To reduce her part of the world to order was poor Mrs. Meyer's perpetual aspiration; and the fact of

its being perpetual showed how vain it was. Her horde of children were always falling down, breaking arms, cutting fingers, tearing clothes, scuffing out shoes, getting lost, filling their faces with powder, cluttering the rooms, upsetting the furniture, and turning things topsy-turvy in general; their playthings were in the china-closet, on the library shelves, under the cradle-pillows, on the lawn; they themselves were under everybody's heels. There was only one comfortable hour in the house where they were, and that was after they were all in bed; nor was that altogether comfortable, for Mabel was tumbling out of bed, and John was walking in his sleep, and it was haunted by remorseful visions of work in patches and darns and running up rips, with which the tired-out mother found it impossible to keep up.

"Oh, we'll help you famously, little mother," said Marcia. "To begin with, you see, Hester will take the baby off your hands entirely. But where's Miss Persis?"

"Her mother was ill, and she went home. Poor Miss Persis! I suppose even that is rest to her," said Mrs. Meyer with a sigh. "But she will be

back by and by. I haven't had an hour's peace since she went, though."

"Poor, dear mamma! And it was such a nice time for you to have your teeth out."

"The dentist came along, and I thought I might as well get it over while your father was away. There, Marcia, there! I've been expecting it! Oh, what is it? What is it? Georgie? Oh, Georgie has killed himself!" And then there was a general swarming of the little Meyers into the room, to exhibit Georgie's mashed finger, and before the rout was quieted the tea-bell rang.

"Oh, here's the cat, Hester," cried Marcia, as she nearly tumbled over that member of the family on the stairs. "My beautiful, big, black Beauty! She's in mourning for her last children, you see,—three of them. They died of wetting their feet. It's an awfully dangerous complaint," said Marcia soberly, as the black Beauty fawned about her in recognition. "She has twenty children in the river now; just think of it. People praise the beauty of this river, but to her it's only one vast cemetery."

"You would n't be making so much of her," said

John, as he stopped a moment in sliding down the banisters, "if she woke you up every night walking on the roof."

"It's where you want to walk yourself, John," said Helen, "but father says you shan't."

"Father's not here now," said John.

"Mamma is."

"Oh, mamma!"

"Well, we shall tell father if you do. He said you were never to open that scuttle-door. He said you would break your neck —"

"And he said you were to leave off sliding down the banisters!" said Rosy.

"Do you see this?" said John. And he took from his pocket a rubber ball that had long been lost. "Where do you suppose I found it? On the roof! And I got out through that scuttle-door! And if you tell father, you shan't play with it!" And then he finished sliding down the banisters.

"Well, Hester," said Marcia, after she had upbraided John, and then gone back to help her mother down, "this is n't like the refectory at St. Marks's; but then it has its advantages. It's as

good as a menagerie, — the little Meyers at table ! Now, Rosy, if you want me to show you about that example, butter your bread in your plate, not in the air. Pretty figure you'll cut at St. Marks's when your turn comes, — with your spoon upside-down in your mouth ! What makes you use a spoon at all ? Why don't you do the way Agnes does, and put your fingers in the salt-cellar ? It looks as if she were cooking."

"Dear me, Marcia, if you've only come home to find fault and tell tales —"

"We shall wish you had stayed at school," said the girls.

"So shall I," said Marcia. "I'm quite used to nice manners at school, and it is horrid to hear anybody make such a noise, eating bread and milk, as Bert does. Hester came from the South Sea Islands, where they are all savages, but I guess she never saw any of them hitting each other under the table the way John is hitting Helen."

"Oh, Marcia !" said Hester timidly.

"I guess she would," said John stoutly. "I guess she'd hit back herself if they pinched her first because she happened to get the biggest piece of gingerbread."

"Helen, if you pinched John," said Mrs. Meyer, "you may go up-stairs to bed without your supper, directly."

Helen, for reply, helped herself to another piece of gingerbread.

"Directly!" repeated her mother.

Helen pushed back her chair, but took another drink of milk, and what she would have done, if her mother had not pushed back her own chair, nobody knows; but at that sound she went, slamming the door behind her.

"Dear me," said Marcia, "I should think we might have had peace just this one time. Such a muss!"

"What would you think if you had it all the time?" asked Rosy with dignity.

"I should try to prevent it, Rosy Posy, and instead — What are you jumping up for now? That's the third time since we sat down. Can't Bridget set the table properly? There, I thought you would," as the glass dish slipped from Rosy's fingers and splintered itself everywhere. "Now Agnes's supper is spoiled, for she's always looking for glass in her food, unless she's reformed —"

"It kills you, you know," said Agnes, looking up.

"Not if it is n't there," said Rosy with scorn.

Meanwhile Mrs. Meyer was trying to pacify little Tot, who was roaring for honey, while the maid was preparing Rafe's tea to be taken up on a tray; and in the midst of it came a general uprising from Bert's upsetting his bowl of milk over the table, and nothing but Mrs. Meyer's frantic clutch at the damask saved cloth and china and all from the floor. "I am so glad your father is n't here," moaned Mrs. Meyer.

"He'd only have laughed if he was," said Bert.

"It's very true," said the half-distracted mother. "If he exerted any authority —"

"He would n't be father, then," said Marcia. "Let me carry up Rafe's tray, mamma. Now, children, you take care of Hester while I'm gone."

In obedience to this injunction, it may have been, although it would have been the first exercise in obedience in his life, John surveyed Hester seriously a moment or two, with the tip of his fork in his mouth. "Do folks eat folks

where you come from, Hester?" asked John then.

"Why, no indeed!" said Hester with an indignant flush.

"John! Go from the table this instant!" said his mother.

"Wait till I finish this," said John, with his mouth full.

"Not a minute. Go at once!"

"But just this little bit," persisted John.

"Do you hear me, John? Are you going to disobey me?"

"Why, of course not," said John, "if you only wait till —"

"Leave the table at once, sir!" she said, half rising.

"Till I get through. There. What's the use of hurrying a fellow?" And John wiped his mouth and folded his napkin leisurely, and all the others laughed, and Mrs. Meyer with them.

By this time came an episode with Agnes, who wanted more of the tart than her mother thought best, and who burst into tears at the refusal, and was threatened with being shut up in a closet.

"You know you could n't do it, mamsey," said John, who had not left the room, but was now climbing on the back of his mother's chair, with his arms round her neck. "You're not strong enough. If it came to a tussle, Agnes would have the best of it, I guess. You put Agnes into a closet, mamsey, you, — living on spoon victuals!" And then John was rubbing his little impudent cheek on his mother's pretty, soft hair, with a caress that rather contradicted the force of his naughty words and ways, and Agnes was securing her piece of tart.

"It seems as if I never should command any respect from my children," said Mrs. Meyer mournfully.

"It's just as well to have us love you, instead, mamsey," said John, still standing tiptoe on the rungs of the chair-back. "You would n't like us all stepping stiff in a row and frightened to death if you wink at us."

"I never *do* wink at you. Bert! Let the bread-knife alone! You will cut yourself again!" And suddenly Mrs. Meyer rose to lean forward and seize the knife, which, of course, Bert didn't let

alone, and back went her chair with John on it, and crack went John's head against the wall, and a roar and an uproar followed that made Hester's heart stand still.

"Well," said Marcia, reappearing in the door as the confusion subsided a little, "are the animals fed?"

"Are n't you ashamed of yourself, Marcia!" said her mother, still rubbing John's head with a bit of ice from her glass.

"Ice in her hand, and her mouth in that condition!" said Marcia.

"I don't want her to!" cried John. "It hurts, anyway. And I only let her do it to please her!"

"They act as if their mother was a baby for them to play with," thought Hester. "Dear me! And talk of heathen!"

"Well, then," said Marcia, "let's all go upstairs and see the sunset from Rafe's window, and Hester will tell you about the other side of the world where she lives." And while they were sitting there Mrs. Meyer crept up with a plate of good things to the supperless Helen, and came down to find peace reigning round Rafe's lounge,

through the gentle art with which he drew one and another of that group, full of noise and vitality, into a quiet enjoyment of what he had to say to them.

"You see," said Marcia to Hester when they were undressing that night, "the children are rather tender to Rafe, because nobody knows who did it."

"Who did it?"

"Hurt him so."

"Oh, Marcia, you don't think —"

"Yes, I do. We all did it. You see he has what is called lumbar abscess. He had a dreadful pain, and the doctor had to operate, and then they found he had a curve in the spine; and to keep him from being a hunchback he has to lie with his head low, and his body in a plaster case. And it all came from our pulling a chair out from under him, and his falling on the floor so that he struck the back just there. Why, Hester, you little goose, I would n't have told you if I'd known you were going to cry! He'll get over it and come out all right. And he says himself he is glad it happened; for it's been a good discipline,

and he thinks in time it will help all the rest. Dear Rafe! He's more fit for heaven now than for the Meyer family!"

Hester sat a great deal by Rafe's lounge after that, having begged permission to hold the new baby on her knee there. She told him the incidents of her brief experience, and all about her dear little Mand; which was a real comfort to her. And he talked to her, as he did not often to the others, of his sorrows and his hopes, and of what he meant to do when he was well. He had quite decided to be a doctor, and he thought he should know a good deal to begin with about hectic fevers and spinal troubles. "You see," he said, "there is nothing better than healing. Christ had nothing better to do when he came on earth. And all the prophets have been healers, too, you know, Hester. There was Elisha"—and, as if the birds of the air told what he was about, half the swarm of children were on hand before the story of Elisha had reached the point where the prophet, encompassed by the hosts of Syria with chariots and horses, told his frightened servant-boy to fear not, for "they that be with us are more than they that be with

them." And then Rafe repeated in his childish way the story of the Lord's opening the lad's eyes: "And, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." "Can't you see it all?" said Rafe. "Legions of angels, the cohorts of the Lord, their great wings arched over their heads, the light of heaven upon the tips of them, and upon the heads of the plunging horses that they held, too, — horses like Job's, you know, — their necks clothed with thunder, and the glory of their nostrils terrible!"

It was just at this point, one afternoon, that little Mabel — I think it was Mabel, one is apt to lose one's self in the multitude of the Meyers — came in rubbing her hands. "Run out and see me fiyeh," she said. "Me has builded bufle fiyeh." And, with an intuition that something might be wrong, Marcia called Hester, and of course the rest followed, to find that the little mischief had piled against the house all the dried leaves and twigs that she could find, and had laboriously kindled them to a blaze, which the wind was doing its best to fan against a light lattice. Of course, with all the help she had, Marcia had no difficulty

in scattering the little bonfire ; and then Mabel had to be instructed in the nature of fire, and the danger of their all burning in their beds if she repeated her play,—a danger which so appalled her that she broke into a solid roar and had to be carried to her mother for comfort.

Her mother was lying down, and Mabel nestled beside her a moment, then sat up for fresh breath, and, overcome with the picture painted of the possibilities of the burning, threw herself back on the pillow with a new cry. She *meant* to throw herself back on the pillow, that is ; but it was a very different thing that the back of her head struck. It was her mother's nose. There was a report like a pistol ; and the children ran in amazement to see their mother's nose all on one side of her poor face, the bone indented by the blow.

“ Oh, we shall kill her, among us ! ” cried Marcia. “ What a pack of little wretches we are ! That's just the way John broke out her front teeth, kicking and throwing himself about when she was trying to get hold of his nose to pour castor-oil down his throat ! ” Then she was out of the house, running for the doctor with all her

might. He came directly, bringing Marcia with him in his chaise, and with a probe he snapped the bone back into place, and no harm done, peace being restored thereby to the Meyer family for a brief period.

But only for a brief period: then Agnes was found behind the sofa with the shears, cutting off every one of Mabel's luxuriant curls, because they were getting too red and she was getting too vain! Mrs. Meyer really shed tears as she walked about picking up the great golden tresses, shining with a splendid thread of fire every here and there; and she had a pain come in the place of every one of her absent teeth, and had to go to bed with head and face wrapped in hot flannels, while Marcia vainly endeavored to keep the house still.

"I'm sure I'm glad father is away," said Marcia. "I don't know what he'd have said to you, Agnes. You know how much he thinks of Mabel's curls!"

"He thinks too much of them," said Agnes loftily.

"I'll tell you what I think of *you*," said Marcia hotly. "You ought to have a good whipping!"

"Well, I shan't get it," said Agnes.

"Come here, children," said Rafe. "Sit down now round my lounge, and I will read you about the Celestial City in 'Pilgrim's Progress.'"

"What is that?" asked Mabel.

"Heaven," said Marcia, taking Tot on her knee, while Hester indulged herself in perfect bliss with the baby on her lap, — "heaven, where we are all going by and by."

"All of us?" said Mabel, from the hassock.

"I hope so; unless we cut off other people's curls any more."

"And all together?" — making a great effort to speak plainly, because Tot could n't: she would not have said "ortogezzer" for a cooky.

"Oh, no, indeed! unless the roof should fall in or we were burned in our beds. It is n't a picnic. One by one, of course, as folks die —"

A wail from Tot stayed her. "Dear, dear! what is it now?" said Marcia; "what is it, Tot? There, there, there! —"

"I done yant to go," cried Tot.

"Don't want to go where?"

"To heben. Oh, pease, I done yant to go!" and

the little lip curled, and the tears swelled again. "I like here!"

"Well, well," said Marcia, "we'll stay here, then; as long as we can, that is."

"*I'm* going," said John, with assurance.

"See that you do," said Rafe. "And now hear this."

Poor little John! he came very near going, and that very night. Hester, usually a light sleeper, woke in the middle of the night with something walking across her face. She thought it was a spider, and brushed it off. Presently it came again. Then she sat up in bed, putting out her hand gropingly, and caught a string,—a string that she shortly saw the wind from the open casement had blown across her face, dangling, as it was, from the edge of the roof overhead, with a fishhook on the end of it. It was so very queer that Hester sprang to the window, put out her head, and looked up.

There was an infinite depth of violet darkness overhead, at first; and then a powder of stars; and, directly afterward Hester saw something else that gave her a worse start than the spider had

given her: it was John's face, in which the eyes were fixed with a strange stare, bending over the eaves above her, and John's two hands pulling with all speed on the string, at which, when she had caught it, he thought a fish had bitten, as he lay flat on the roof, whither he had walked in his sleep, under the impression that he was playing truant from school and had gone fishing.

Hester had never heard of such a thing as walking in one's sleep, and knew nothing of the danger of waking such a person, nor of the fact that John could not see her. She could not imagine what pleasure he was taking; but she was far too shy to speak to him, and she softly drew in her head, and would presently have been asleep had not her movement startled Marcia, in reply to whose questions she told, with some hesitation, what John was about.

"He'll go in wading, next thing," said Marcia, "and just step off the roof then and break every bone in his body. Oh, what shall we do! I hate to wake mamma: John will certainly be killed! Why does n't father stay at home, instead of going off hunting in Maine!" And talking to herself all

the way with vehemence, Marcia ran and waked the hired man, and sent him creeping cautiously, along the roof, with the double clothes-line round his body, till he could grab John by the waist and bring him up, and then down to safety.

"And I hope the start you had," said Marcia to him the next day, "will cure such a horrid habit. If you had minded what father said, and never gone up that attic ladder and opened that scuttle in the first place, when you were awake, you would never have known how to go there when you were asleep! Let my cat alone, John! I won't have her run round so by the tail. She's in mourning, don't you see? You've done her harm enough already. And you know father told you not to drown any more kittens!"

"Somebody must," said John.

"Well, you let all *my* kittens alone. If there's a hundred, I want to see them when I come home."

"If I don't mind father, I guess I shan't mind you!"

"You're getting to be a terrible boy, John Meyer, and an awful example to Bert. You don't

mind anybody. It's a comfort to think there's something you have to mind. You have to mind law: if you break your arm, you have to suffer; if you scratch the skin off, you have to smart."

"And I should think you were glad of it! I'm as good as Joe Jones, anyway!"

"What do you know about Joe Jones?"

"You don't suppose Charlotte Risley lives over the way," said Rosy, "without our hearing something of what goes on at Waterways?"

"And I'll just let you know, Marcia Meyer," resumed John, "that I—"

"That you're my dear old John," said Marcia, with a laugh, "if you do drown my kittens and go fishing in your sleep to get them back;" and then John laughed, too.

"I won't touch your old cat," he said.

"You have a real faculty, Marcia," sighed her mother. "You do better with them than I do. You seem so much older."

"That's because I've been at St. Marks, and learned how not to do what Miss Brown does."

"Poor Miss Brown," said her mother, "you know she has narrow means, and she is naturally

fidgety ; and she gets worn out with work ; and then, besides, she is all the time anxious and worried about her sick people at home. I know just how it is," said Mrs. Meyer.

" Well, even Miss Brown can't spoil the work at Waterways. But I hope I shall get through in season to have a go at the baby. I mean to make her my one especial object in life."

" And then perhaps your mother'll name her for you, Marcia," said Hester, and could not in the least understand the unanimous roar that followed.

" Marcia," said Hester, at the end of her exciting visit,—when she had, with some reluctance, bidden good-by to Rafe and his dreams, to all the other children and their racket, and with ineffable love and longing had held the little downy peach of a baby in her arms for a last half hour, — " I think one of the reasons that Miss Marks sent me here was that I might see what disobedience does."

" You do, do you ? I don't suppose you know that you are mighty frank. But I guess you're right. St. Marks makes a business of finding out all about all of us, and she knows as well as I do the ins and outs of the Meyers."

“And, Marcia, do you know,” continued Hester, feeling sure that Marcia agreed with her, and took no offence over a statement of palpable fact, “I think we both of us have some of the same work to do,—missionary work to do. For, if I am going home to civilize my heathen —”

“I am going home, too, you mean,” cried Marcia gayly, “to civilize my little savages! Well, they are dear little savages, every one!”

CHAPTER IV.

THE heart of Marcia Meyer, herself no more favored than Hester was by Miss Brown, who used to call her "that tall, wough, wude Miss Meyer," had been moved in the beginning by the little desolate stranger. Now that Hester had been put in her care for a season by Miss Marks, and had been at her home, she felt as if she had become in some measure a member of the Meyer family ; and on their return to school she showed herself, so far as there was any occasion for it, Hester's ardent adherent, and was quite ready to fight her battles if she had any.

In return, Hester, not only drawn nearer to Marcia now that Maud was gone, but feeling, through her acquaintance with her mother and the little savages, as if they were really related, did for her the only things she knew how, and

secretly — so that Marcia might some day amaze the girls with her accomplishment — taught her to play a fandango on her guitar, and an accompaniment to a song that sounded very well in the deep contralto tones of Marcia's voice.

One day, moreover, crying over the dreadful operation of parsing "Peter's cap," puzzling why one word should be in the possessive case, or why one word should govern, or be governed by, another, and what it all meant anyway, Marcia had found her, and taking the book, had made the whole thing clear as looking through crystal, and by some secret spring had suddenly opened her eyes to all the wide firmament of grammar.

Then Hester, cudgelling her brain for something further with which she might please Marcia, enticed her, in the twilight of the recreation hour, down to the water's edge at the foot of the garden, evening after evening, and floated her in the water with herself till she had fairly taught her how to swim, and to swim more than tolerably well. For Marcia was afraid of nothing: and as soon as she saw Hester diving under water like a duck, she was determined she would do the same thing.

And so they stole up out of the water one evening, in their long dripping night-dresses, like two little mermaids, only to be pounced upon by Miss Brown, who dragged them before Miss Marks, where they stood in pools of water soaking from their one garment, their hair, their elbows, their noses, and their ten fingers.

"I thought mischief was brewing, Miss Marks, with these childwen's heads together every spare hour. And now, you see, half the young ladies will be drowned by her before term closes!"

"Put them to bed directly, Miss Brown, before they catch their death," said Miss Marks. "They already have been too long in their wet things, and we will talk of this to-morrow."

In the morning, after prayers, and before the classes separated, Miss Marks summoned Hester to her desk, and said, "Should you like to take a class in swimming, Hester?"

Hester in a moment understood the good lady's intention to instruct her that she need not do in secret that which it was not wrong in itself to do, and also to let her show the girls that she, too, had some knowledge worth imparting, and assented gladly.

"And you feel perfectly competent?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, Miss Marks!" she exclaimed. "There is nothing I can't do in the water! I can live in it. And I can teach them to swim, to float, to dive, to sew in it, to read a book in it, to live in it too! I could — I could — teach —"

"Teach me?" said Miss Marks looking down into the wistful eyes. "Well, you shall, at some time. Young ladies," said Miss Marks, then addressing the school, "how many of you would like to learn to swim?"

Every hand in the room rose in an instant, and in some cases two of them, like a rosy swarm of little flames.

"Well, I never!" murmured Miss Brown inaudibly. "Wewarding her for it, as sure as my name is Bwown!"

"Not so fast," said Miss Marks. "I think the teacher of natation can receive only a half-dozen in her class at first; and, although in future I will make entrance to the class a reward of merit, the members of the first class may be chosen by the teacher herself."

"You know I have an assistant," whispered

Hester a little archly. "Marcia swims pretty well."

"Then, with Marcia to share your labors, we will designate ten."

"I should n't like to choose," murmured Hester, "any but you and Miss Brown."

"Miss Bwown, indeed!" murmured that individual with a toss, seeing Hester's chance of revenging herself for numerous wrongs by catching her hair, or holding her nose under water. "Not while she wemains in her senses!"

"Let me choose them, Miss Marks!" cried Marcia, in reply to Miss Marks's bow at her uplifted hand.

"I don't know about that, Marcia," answered Miss Marks. "I think you knew it was doubtful whether you were doing right or not; but Hester, who has always been accustomed to the water, because in the South Sea Islands people are almost as much in water as on land, — Hester had no idea of disapproval. I will name them myself. Bella Brook —"

"I'll just hold her head down till she begs for mercy for not prompting me yesterday," whispered Marcia.

"Fanny Doane, Sally Martin, Margaret Payson, Hilda—I feel very much encouraged by your nods of approval, Miss Meyer!" And then as Marcia blushed and laughed, and, whispering something very rapidly, hid her face behind her desk cover, she went on and named the rest.

And that sunset the first lesson was given,—the whole school being allowed to go down to the foot of the garden and witness some preparatory exercises in the shape of an exhibition of Hester's powers in the water. She dived from the top of the great rock, scooted under the surface and came up at a distance, walked in it, lay on her back on it and made believe read a letter which she couldn't read out of it, and finally, putting one arm round Marcia's neck, went floating away with her as if they had been a pair of sea-nymphs, while the whole school were enthusiastic over the performance. It occurred to Miss Marks that she needed no better system of rewards and punishments than the swimming-school would afford her.

"And when they have learned to swim, Miss Marks," cried Hester, "I can teach them how to

row!" And then with ineffable pride she began her instructions to each girl of her class by herself. "I am a little savage," she said gayly to Marcia, "but then, you see, savages have their uses."

"I weally should like to see the use of this," murmured Miss Brown to herself from her post of observation. "Pwetty work it will be if Mr. Marquand's boys find it out and come swimming over! I would weally be willing to wager that that little wogue deliberwately planned the thing, the minx!"

But Miss Brown was not entirely correct. It was not Hester, but Marcia, who had ever thought of such a possibility. As for Hester, she did not even know that there was such a person as Mr. Marquand, still less, that he was a clergyman at the head of a school for boys just across the bay.

It would not have entered her wildest dreams to imagine such a thing as the young gentlemen swimming across the little bay in their bathing-suits, for the sake of seeing Bella Brook, Marcia Meyer, and that demure little puss, Charlotte Risley. "Miss Wisley," said Miss Brown once with much truth, "wequires untiwing watchful-

ness." And when Miss Brown saw Miss Risley and Miss Brook making their stout ticking swimming-suits uncommonly coquettish, all the detective in her rose; she determined to have an eye on them, and she thought it would go hard if, between herself and Mr. Marquand's tutors, any such gayeties could be successful. It certainly would not be Mr. Marquand's fault, she knew; for never were boys more jealously guarded from the wiles of a female seminary than his, what with himself, his tutors, and his dogs.

Yet something told Miss Brown that what boys wanted to do they would, if they had to slide down the lightning-rod to do it.

CHAPTER V.

ONCE in every half year Mr. Marquand gave his young gentlemen a party to which all of Miss Marks's young ladies were invited, and once in every half year Miss Marks returned the compliment.

But the gathering at Miss Marks's was usually one for which some little exhibition was arranged, — such as a charade, or a French play, — and to which the trustees and townspeople were invited; the latter, however, only on the payment of a small fee to be devoted to charitable uses. One of these exhibitions was now in preparation; and the importance of the young ladies chosen for performers, and called upon at all odd times for rehearsal, was only equalled by their happiness.

Cinderella was the play to be given as the chief feature of the evening. The properties of the

play were easily procured, — an old-fashioned crib, with its high bamboo frame for netting, answering for a coach, when covered with gilt paper, the gardener and his sons being allowed to take the part of coachman and footmen, and the horses being supposed to be just outside the door, through which a long bunch of hair representing a horse's tail was whisked on occasion, and where a great stamping was kept up. The attic of every acquaintance, of course, was ransacked for finery for the court ladies.

Nearly at the last moment, and but a day or two before the fateful night, little May Roberts sprained her ankle, and her part of the Fairy Godmother bade fair to be a lame performance.

"What are we going to do, Miss Marks?" exclaimed Marcia, who, in a long talma and top-boots, was to enact the Fairy Prince.

"I really don't know," said Miss Marks after a little thought, "unless Hester can take it. She is small enough, and has shown some power of memorizing. You — you may speak to her about it."

"Oh, how I should like it!" replied Hester,

who, to tell the truth, had rather envied the string of tall girls that she had seen called from the study-room, at times, to practise their parts. "But — don't laugh at me, Marcia — I don't know what Cinderella is!"

"You poor child! And have you lived to this without fairy stories? Did you never hear of 'Jack the Giant-Killer,' nor the 'Sleeping Beauty,' nor 'Rumpelstutzkin,' nor the 'Fairy' —"

"Tell me truly, Marcia," whispered Hester, "what is a fairy?"

"You don't tell me you don't know?" cried Marcia, appalled at Hester's ignorance. "Oh, shan't we have a nice time telling you!" And she forthwith proceeded to recite to her the thrilling story of Cinderella, word for word, as if it were true.

"We will have a fairy story now every night in our dormitory, when Brownie's off-week comes, till there are none left. I'll coax poor old Cherdidi with candy, — she'll do a great deal for bonbons," said the naughty Marcia, as she concluded.

"Oh Marcia," cried Hester, never dreaming of

doubting her. "*You are my* fairy godmother. Yes, indeed, I will learn the part if I have to study all night!"

"They won't let you do that; but now you can come with us and read it as we act."

And suddenly, with a new world opening before her, — the world of fairy-land, — Hester slowly read over all she had to say; and then, going with Marcia to Miss Marks, acted out the part so well, entering into it with such spirit, and imagining herself the old fairy with such reality, although still reading from the page she held, that the girls forgot their own parts in wondering at her.

"I declare," cried Bella Brook, as they talked it over after Miss Marks and Hester had gone, "I felt as if my brown gown were really going to turn into pink satin when she flew around and touched me with her wand, her black eyes shining so! It's great luck May Roberts is sick. Hester will make it spin as if it were alive!"

"And to think," said Marcia, "that she never heard of fairies, and that now she believes all you tell her! See her out there in the garden now; I

declare she's looking in the lilies for them! Oh, what times we are going to have with her! Is your dress all right, Bella? Charlotte will make a splendid court lady, won't she? But don't you think Margaret Payson ought to seem more spiteful than she does, for the other wicked step-sister? She's spiteful enough in ordinary life, I'm sure."

"Lucky Miss Marks does n't hear you, March!"

What a night it was for Hester, that next one! In her little red-heeled slippers and pointed cap, with the cloak stuffed out behind like a hump, and with the heavy cane, she stepped from the opening wall to the sighing Cinderella, transformed the crying, dingy object by a touch of her wand to the jewelled and dazzling creature, turned pumpkin and rats and mice to gilded coach and gold-laced driver and postilions, all as if she really believed in herself, and were actually performing the wonders she pretended to do.

It was nothing to her that there was an audience of the townspeople and trustees present; although, of course, there was encouragement in all the upturned and admiring faces. And as for Mr. Marquand's boys, at that period of her life

she cared much less for a boy than she did for a girl. She was simply carried away by the delight of fancying herself possessed of supernatural powers, and was playing only to herself and Marcia, with a faint idea of Miss Marks and the universe somewhere on the edge of space.

"Did you ever know anything like it?" cried Bella Brook to Miss Risley, as scene after scene passed off and all the repeated applause was not for them but for Hester. "Is n't it capital in her? But we're all out of sight."

"I suppose it's because she's so little," said Charlotte. "Paul Munster was clapping you."

"As if I cared what Paul Munster was doing!"

"Well, you do; you know you do. There's your cue." And then Cinderella danced on the stage again.

"I do declare!" exclaimed Margaret Payson, by-and-by, as she came off in her turn. "Did you ever know anything so mean? Here we are doing our very best, and everybody used to applaud us so, and now nobody seems to see a soul but this little wretch, who does n't have much to say, anyway. She acts just as if she thought she really *was* a fairy!"

"Do you know," said Fanny Doane, joining them, "she never heard of such a thing till day before yesterday, and she's perfectly wild about it, Marcia says."

"Strange! I thought they had all sorts of superstitions down there where she came from," said Charlotte, "if she has n't herself."

"So they do; and I suppose she's just like the rest,—lived in the water all her life; learned French talking with the French missionaries; ready to believe anything. But they don't have fairies down there; they have little gods for everything, Miss Marks says,—Tuesday's god and Friday's god,—but nothing like our exquisite fancies of the fairy elves."

"That sounds just like Miss Marks! There comes Hester now. See her hobbling on her cane, and shaking her head,—a little old dwarf-woman. I should like to know the sense of her hobbling across the back of the stage in every scene without saying a word."

"Miss Marks says it's to keep up the remembrance of the fairy element," said Charlotte.

"Miss Marks is too 'high-falutin' for anything,"

Fanny Doane declared. "Now hear them applauding her! Should n't you think she'd really done something?"

"I'll do something! I declare I will!" cried Margaret. "It's the last scene, coming now, — yes, it is, I know, because I just ran out to make ready for the officers who are coming with the prince to try on the slipper. See, are my plumes all right? I've all the false hair in school on top of my head, I do believe."

"Yes, this is her transformation scene," said Charlotte, "when she throws off cloak and hump and pointed cap."

"And stands out in her gauzy skirts and rose-colored wings, with the star on her forehead and another on her wand," said Fanny.

"Humph — humph!" said Margaret softly, and half to herself, "I guess there won't be quite so much applause just then. There's my word! Hurry up, Charlotte; you steal in just behind me, all in a heap, you know. 'The prince, mamma? the prince? and with the glass slipper? Oh, I know it will exactly fit my foot!'" saying which words she was again upon the stage.

It was really a pretty scene, that last one, considering the limited resources of the school, — the haughty step-mother and her daughters, the prince, with all the gold-laced court behind him, the gray rags falling off Cinderella, while she sat in the centre putting on the slipper, and disclosing a white splendor of spangled laces, as the fairy godmother, suddenly appearing upon the scene, touched her with the tip of the old cane.

In another instant, springing up some steps concealed behind the group, in order to seem above them all, the godmother, just in the act of throwing off her cloak and pointed cap, and revealing her fairy garb, was tripped by an artful foot, and with a suppressed scream, and a moment of struggling and swinging, fell headlong into the midst of the cluster, carrying down one or two with her.

It was only a moment before she was on her feet again. Her nose was bleeding, but her eyes were blazing. She made a rush for Margaret Payson, before any one could hinder, tore down the lofty structure of her false hair, till the stage was strewn with switches, snatched away

her plumes, her veil, her great ruff, her beads, her ribbons; and goodness only knows what she would not have done if, at that moment, the curtain had not begun to drop, and Miss Brown had not run upon the scene, among all the bewildered and frightened players, and, snatching Hester in her arms, carried her, kicking and screaming, out of sight.

“Oh you dweadful little fuwy!” cried Miss Brown, flinging Hester into a dark room. “Stay there!”

And there, still kicking and screaming, Hester stayed; for Miss Brown had shut and locked the door behind her.

In the hall all was surprise and confusion. Every one was asking how the accident happened; some were regretting it, and others treating it with ridicule. The friends of Hester, who had been made proud by her triumphs, were chagrined, and sought some ground of excuse for her conduct. It did, indeed, seem a matter for regret that so great happiness and well-earned success should be eclipsed in such a sudden and mortifying manner.

CHAPTER VI.

“WHAT have you done with Hester, Miss Brown?” asked Miss Marks, hurrying to meet her assistant as soon as she could leave those by whom she had been detained.

“She’s all wight till to-morwow,” said Miss Brown.

“Was ever anything so unfortunate? I have always had my misgivings about these plays, and now I see plainly that it is wrong and unwise to have them here. What passions they excite! This is the very last.”

“My dear Miss Marks! Depwive the young ladies of so gweat a pleasure and the poor of all the money it bwings, because this little wetched thing, this little cannibal — I verwily believe she’d have bitten Margwet in a moment —”

“Oh, don’t speak of it, Miss Brown! It fairly makes me ill. To think of that child — What had Margaret done?”

"Nothing!" said Miss Brown. "A mere nothing, so far as I could see. But weally, Miss Marks, I think there are too many needing us now, to discuss it."

"That is true," said Miss Marks; and so they separated.

But there were two young shadows in the mean time standing in the deeper shadow.

"Will you just tell me, March, what makes such a gentle saint as Miss Marks keep that Brownie?" whispered one of them.

"For two reasons, Bella. One is, that there is n't another such teacher of mathematics to be had for money. And the other is because Brownie has a mother and two sick sisters to support, and Miss Marks knows nobody else would put up with her. Now you just creep through the long window. I'm going to see what she's done with Hester first. 'Nothing,' indeed! Didn't you *see* Margaret's toe send her flying?"

"Oh, Hester'll keep. Miss Brown can't be doing anything to her now, and I want you to come down in the garden with me. If Paul sees that cloak over your shoulder, and that soft hat,

he 'll think somebody's strolling with me, and be so furious ! It will be great fun."

"Well, one moment ; but only one, remember." And Cinderella and the Fairy Prince stole down into the dark flower-scented paths of the garden half in moonlight, arm in arm, like two lovers in some romance, — the long cloak that hid the skirt, and the darkness of the paths, disguising the fact that not only one, but both, of the lovers were girls.

Meantime Hester slipped from the leather sofa in the recitation-room, where Miss Brown had thrust her, to the floor ; and she lay there sobbing and talking fast to herself, beating the floor with her feet, stopping to wring her hands and tear her hair, and then again screaming and rolling in the dust, till, all at once, nature being entirely exhausted, she fell sound asleep.

Hester did not sleep more than half an hour, however, before she awoke with a groan, and began to look about her. She tried to remember where she was, and why it was so dark, and why she felt so terrible a weight on her. And then everything rushed back, and with a cry of despair she sat upright in the black room.

“Oh, Miss Marks will never forgive me!” she exclaimed. “And I love her so! And Marcia — will — despise me — and Bella —” And a flood of tears again relieved her for a moment.

Through her tears, at last, chancing to look up, Hester saw something glimmering. It was the summer night outside the window. For, although the room was dark, the moon shone on a part of the garden which it overlooked.

She rose, and groping her way, climbed to the window-seat and looked out. She was perfectly wretched; she wished she could die; she thought if she did die, there was nobody to care. She had not heard from her father since the first fortnight of her stay at school, when he wrote from San Francisco, just before setting sail. He might, even now, be rolling in his grave beneath the waves! And, overcome with the misery of the thought, again she wept. And what would he think of her if he had seen her! Oh, how she had disgraced him! And her promise to Maud — alas! alas! her promise to Maud! And if Rafe should know!

When her tears allowed her to see anything again, Hester observed the lights in the wing.

They were dancing contra-dances in the great school-room that had been cleared of its desks for the purpose. How she had expected to go "down outside and up the middle," as if her rosy wings were carrying her! The music of piano and violin and horn came to her like a mockery. What were music and gayety for in a world where everything was so hollow!

Figures were moving, too, in the garden below. The fragrance of the flowers crept towards her, through the open window, on a little fitful wind. A bird, that had built just outside it, wakened by all the stir, poured forth a throatful of trills and warbles. It was plain to Hester that she did not belong to any such happy world as this. She longed to be down among her balmy islands and her savages, with all their worthless life and ignorance.

The figures in the garden came nearer; was it — could it be — yes, as the light fell fully there, she saw that it was Marcia, — Marcia and that great fat Joe Jones, Bella and Paul Munster. Marcia had pointed out Paul to her once in church, and had said that Bella would have had to make public

expiation if Miss Marks knew she wore a ring that Paul had given her.

She had herself once said that if she were to be wrecked on a desert island, she had rather it would be with Joe than anybody.

They had passed down the honeysuckle alley while Hester was thinking of this; and just as she would have called them back she was stricken with shame and fear, and knew Marcia would never want to speak to her again; and she burst into another howl that stopped only as it swept over her that they would take it for some dog's, and she reduced it to a series of sobs and gulps.

As she crouched there, hugging her misery, the dancing ceased, she saw, in the wing; the sound of feet told her that everybody was going down to the dining-room for ice-cream and cake.

Marcia had told her about the delights of that unknown ice-cream, for Marcia had crept into the kitchen and had had a piece of the cake yesterday; and she would have none; and her throat was so hot and parched!

And then the horn and the violin began playing softly a melancholy air from "*Trovatore*," — the



"She leaned far out and over. It was Marcia. 'I've got some ice for you, dear, and some cake.'" — PAGE 87.

duet in the prison scene, with its unutterable sweetness and sadness; and it seemed to Hester that nobody else was ever so unhappy as she, and nobody else ever deserved to be; and the falling tears kept time to the music.

"Hst! Hst! Hst!" whispered something softly under the window. "Hester! Hst!"

She leaned far out and over. It was Marcia.

"I've got some ices for you, dear, and some cake. I watched my chance, and Joe cribbed them for me. You reach down and I'll reach up. They're just luscious!"

"Oh Marcia! Marcia darling!" sobbed Hester. "Do you forgive me?"

"I forgive you?" exclaimed Marcia imprudently. "Well, that's a great go! And what a question, with these ices melting!"

"But do you?"

"What in the world should I forgive? I'm glad you did it! It was perfectly splendid; it did me good to see it, and so it did Joe! Though, of course, you know," she added, "it was very wicked. But I guess Peggy Payson won't put out her toe again in a hurry!"

"I — I — I bit it!" said Hester, in an agony of mortification and confession.

"Well — I hope it hurt her! She deserved it, the spiteful thing! Here, dear, they'll melt, and they're so nice, — reach down —"

"No, Marcia dear; I can't have them. Miss Marks does n't mean me to have them. I'm put here for punishment; and I could n't take them, really —"

"Why, she'll never know!"

"But you know I should know, and I can't. Oh, I wish I could! I am so thirsty. But it would be wrong. I'm bad enough now. I must n't."

"What perfect nonsense, Hester Stanley!"

"Don't you tempt me, Marcia dear."

"And what in the world am I to do with them?"

"'When in doubt, take the trick,'" said a deeper voice. And Joe Jones solved the problem by demolishing the contents of the plate in double-quick time.

"Now, you'd better eat the plate," said Marcia scornfully.

"No," said Joe, with great good-nature. "I'll put that where I found it. Come along!"

"I'll be back and let you out as soon as I can," whispered Marcia. "Brownie's on guard now." And then Hester was alone again.

"I suppose it was wrong in me to answer her at all," said Hester to herself. "But she was so good and kind to me!"

And, soothed by the knowledge that Marcia, at least, stood by her, presently Hester's head drooped forward, and she lay, in a little bunch, on the broad window-seat, utterly exhausted, and lulled asleep by the soft rise and fall of the tune breathed by the horn and violin.

When she awoke all was still; there were no voices, no people, no music, — only a great glare in her eyes. It was Miss Brown, holding a lamp; and beside her, stately and superb and fair, in her black velvet gown and string of pearls, stood Miss Marks.

Hester sprang to her feet on the window-sill to face them. Miss Brown laughed, in spite of her severity. What a pitiful little object it was standing there! — her gauze skirts in strings, her silk

stockings torn, her rosy wings crushed and fallen, her long hair in snarls, her silver star jammed and awry, — broken, limp, draggled, rolled in dust and tears and blood, a very culprit fay.

She hid her face in her arms with cries and sobs, and only felt as if she had died and been forgiven when Miss Marks's strong arms closed round her, and Miss Marks's face was bent above her, — the soft, warm, velvet cheek against her own and wet with her stormy tears, — and she was being carried off, to Miss Brown's wrathful amazement, to Miss Marks's own room.

CHAPTER VII.

“YOUNG ladies,” said Miss Marks, the next morning, on the conclusion of the prayers, “you were witnesses of a very sad occurrence last night. Nothing in the history of the school has ever given me more pain —”

“Oh, I know it! I know it!” wailed a little voice from a head bowed on a desk.

“But I am glad to say,” continued Miss Marks, “that Hester Stanley realizes the shamefulness of her behavior, and has begged to be punished as she thinks such an outburst of temper deserves, and has expressed her willingness to expiate her fault either by dismissal from the school or by a term of solitary imprisonment on bread and water.”

There was just the beginning of a smile in the corner of Miss Marks’s eye, that became visible

to some of the older girls before the exclamation "Oh!" had quite passed their lips.

"You all know," Miss Marks resumed, — not noticing that involuntary remark, — "that I do not believe in the expiation of sin by undergoing further penance or suffering for it than that which will fix the fact of its wrongfulness more firmly in our minds, or enable us better to starve out and control the passion which has led us into sin. Therefore I have been unwilling to condemn Hester to the punishment which she considers meet for her offence; and I have ordered, instead, that she shall speak to no one, and no one shall speak to her, for the period of one week. At the end of that time I hope she will feel fit to associate with people of gentle behavior."

"Oh, I never shall! I never shall!" sobbed Hester. "It's no use to try and civilize me! I had better go back to my savages!"

"In the mean time," said Miss Marks, "the swimming lessons will be suspended, and —"

"I wonder what's going to be done to Peggy Payson?" whispered Marcia to Bella, under cover of the general murmur, and while Miss Brown's eyes were rolled in sarcasm to the ceiling.

"As for Miss Payson," Miss Marks went on, "a young woman of the advanced class, nearly twice the size of her victim, who deliberately puts out a foot and trips her, and gives her a mortifying fall, which, for all she knew, might have done serious injury, — what shall be done to such a person as that? Well, Marcia?" as a hand flew up.

"I think," said Marcia, rising a moment to speak, as the custom was, "that if Miss Stanley deserves solitary imprisonment on bread and water, Miss Payson should be drawn and quartered."

"Take your seat, Miss Meyer!" said Miss Marks, in the midst of the te-he that followed. "Do you really think this is a subject to be ridiculed? You will learn and repeat, this evening, before the school, the hundred and fortieth Psalm, in which the singer prays to be delivered from those who have indulged such passions as Margaret's envy and Hester's anger. Hester's anger was indeed terrible; but I doubt, after all, if, in its effect on her character, its indulgence is so bad as that of the envy, malice, and meanness that aroused it. I am at a loss to know how to punish such an action as Margaret's; but

I am relieved in the dilemma by Hester's request that nothing shall be done with her. Perhaps Hester has already done enough."

"Humph!" said Miss Brown.

"Whether she deserves to have her request granted or not," continued Miss Marks, "I am inclined to grant it; because, if there is a spark of nobility left in Margaret, she can have no worse punishment than that of owing her impunity to the person whom she so deliberately injured. The classes will form."

"One moment, Miss Marks," said Miss Brown. "There is another matter wequiwing your attention. Last night two of the young ladies were observed walking in the garden with two young gentlemen long after the doors were locked. And those young ladies bwoke into the house and jcwept to their beds when the west of the house were asleep. Who the culpwits are wemains to be known."

"I wonder who it could have been," whispered Marcia to Bella, who, although very white, could hardly keep from giggling.

"Are you perfectly correct, Miss Brown?" asked Miss Marks, with a grave face.

"Perfectly corwect," said Miss Brown.

"This is something very serious," said Miss Marks, taking her seat again. "The young ladies who were guilty of this offence," she said, breaking the silence after a few moments, "know how grievously they have violated the rules. I hope they will come to me at once and make an explanation."

"They never will in the world, Miss Marks," said Miss Brown, in an undertone.

"Pray be quiet, Miss Brown," said Miss Marks, in the same tone. "I hope," she added aloud, "that the care I have spent on my pupils has not been so wasted that any two of them will allow all the others to remain under this suspicion." But nobody moved, or volunteered reply.

"Of course you are aware, Miss Marks," said Miss Brown, "that there is another person who knows all about it. Hester Stanley," she continued, as Miss Marks turned on her with a look of wonder, "was in a window looking on the garden, and could not have failed to see them."

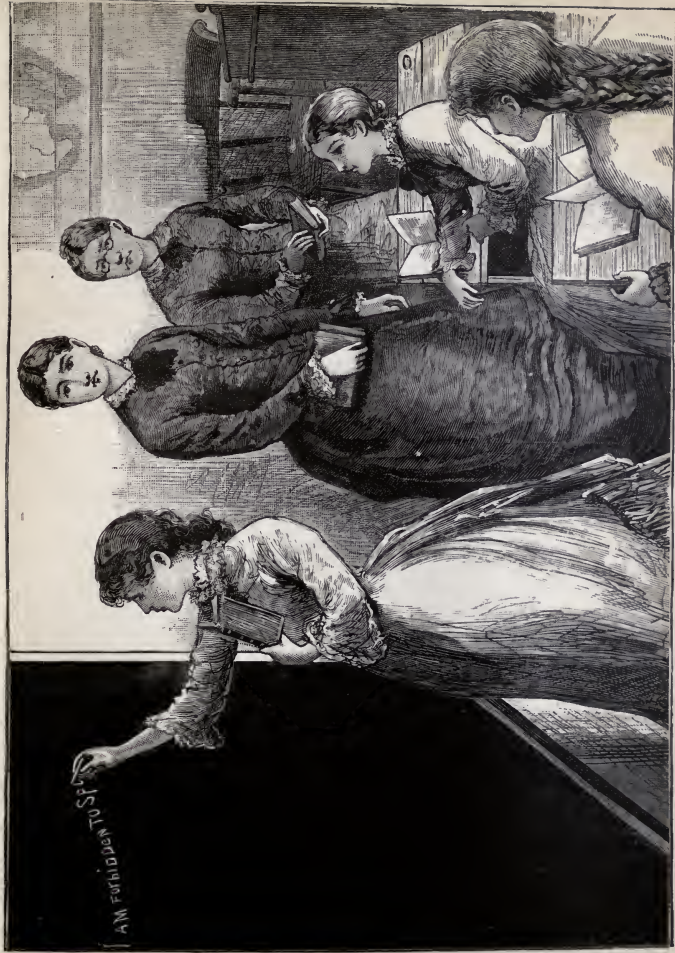
"Aha!" said Marcia, under her breath.

"Hester, what have you to say to this?" asked Miss Marks. There was no reply. "Did you hear me, Hester?" she asked again. Still there was no reply. "Don't you intend to answer me, Hester?" said Miss Marks, this time in a higher key.

Hester arose, and stood a moment balancing this way and that. Then, pale as ashes, and looking, as Marcia afterward said, as if she had rather be killed, she took her spelling-book and walked to the blackboard, and, ready to cry with vexation that the girls should see her ignorance so plainly and her inability to write, she chose a crayon and printed on the board, with slow and careful comparison of the letters with her spelling-book, amidst the breathless amazement and silence of teachers and scholars, the words, —

"I am forbidden to speak."

Miss Marks laughed, whether she would or not. She knew very well that Hester meant no impertinence. "You are not forbidden to speak to me," she said. "You are commanded to do so. Did you see two young ladies in the garden last evening, walking alone with two young gentlemen?"



"At what time?" asked Hester, after a brief hesitation.

"Oh, you don't believe she's going to tell!" whispered Marcia to the universe.

"You heard what Miss Brown said. After the doors were locked."

"No, ma'am."

"She's a trump! She's a trump!" whispered Marcia again.

"You are telling me the truth, Hester?"

"I went to sleep, Miss Marks, while the band was playing, and I did n't wake up till you came."

"Very well. I must change the question, I see. I did n't suppose you would prevaricate." Hester's face turned from white to dark purple as she stood. "Did you see two young ladies walking there with two young gentlemen before you went to sleep?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Who were they?"

The school held its breath.

"I can't tell."

"She means she won't tell," said Miss Brown.

"I would really be obliged to you, Miss Brown," said Miss Marks, with an impatient gesture. "Do

you mean, Hester, that you are not going to tell me?"

"Yes, ma'am," she said, trembling from head to foot.

"Do you know that I can require you to tell me?"

"You cannot require me," she said, looking up fearlessly into Miss Marks's face.

"The stuff that martyrs are made of!" whispered Marcia exultingly.

"Cannot?"

"Oh, Miss Marks!" said the child, "I will always confess my own sins. I cannot confess those of others!"

"Would you find it as hard to tell if it were Margaret Payson's sin?"

"I — I don't know. I am afraid I should n't —."

"So it was not Margaret, at any rate, it seems," said Miss Marks, with a smile reflected on the faces of the school. "Then you absolutely refuse to tell," she said slowly. "Not even if I excuse you from your week of punishment?"

"I don't want you to excuse me, Miss Marks; I want to be punished," Hester exclaimed.

"And do you know what will be the result of your continued refusal?"

"Oh, I don't know; something dreadful, I suppose!" she cried, bursting into tears. "But indeed, indeed, Miss Marks, you can't want me to tell!"

"You are right, Hester. And you have gone through a trying ordeal. As the last comer, you apparently did not yet know that I never allow one young lady to tell tales of another. If you had told, I should have a very different opinion of you. I have usually my own way of discovering guilt. My grandfather used to range his children before him when he wished to learn who was the offender in any wrong-doing, and take down the almanac and consult the signs of the zodiac there, the guilt of the guilty one, meanwhile, growing more and more plain to see. I know an old farmer, too, who used to say, 'The one that stole the melon has a bit of cotton on the end of his nose,' and quick as thought the guilty hand would go up to brush away that bit of cotton. I hardly resort to such means as that; but guilt has its own writing, when one knows how to read it, whether the young lady turns pale, as you do,

Hester, giggles, as Bella Brook does, or keeps up a running whisper, as Marcia does. I shall say no more at present, hoping that the young ladies who have so grossly disobeyed my regulations, and brought such a scandal on my school, will apologize and give me some reason for their conduct. You can now call the classes, Miss Park."

"I think I hear the weason," muttered Miss Brown, as the girls filed by to the recitation-room.

"What are you going to do about it, March?" whispered Bella, as they crossed in the vestibule.

"Oh, I suppose I may as well own up. You see she knows who it is —"

"It—it's pretty sure to expel us—it ought to. Oh, I wish I'd never seen Waterways!"

"We can throw ourselves on her mercy; and St. Marks is tender-hearted. However—I don't know —"

CHAPTER VIII.

OF course there were a number of the girls who felt Hester's willingness to expiate her offence a sort of reproach to themselves,—girls, who, if not always eager to do wrong, were always eager to evade penalty,—and these, when just within hearing, would mention her as “goody-goody,” and lie in wait to make her speak, although failing in the attempt.

“What a thing it is to be a sphinx and not open your mouth,” said Bessy Byrnes, with a side-long look at the silent little creature, who would have excited the pity of older people.

“A sphinx looks as if it knew so much! And if it don't open its mouth, nobody 'll know it don't know anything,” answered Fanny Doane.

“Take care, then, how you open yours, Fanny,” cried Bella, at Hester's quick upward glance, as

she sauntered about, with her arm round Charlotte Risley's waist in Marcia's absence. . " 'Don't' for 'does n't!' Hester Stanley knows too much to make that mistake."

"Girls, say!" cried Fanny. "Why is Hester Stanley like one of the parts of speech?"

"Because she's up in grammar, because she's an indefinite article, because she declines to speak—"

"You don't decline 'to speak,' you conjugate it."

"Because she's in the imperfect then, or because she's a proper noun, third person, very singular, or —"

"You're not up in grammar, any way, Fanny Doane, and I don't believe you can tell the answer yourself! I say, girls, why is Fanny Doane like 'shoofly'?"

"Because she bothers?"

"Because she's always in the vocative."

"Dear me, how learned! Horrida Bella! We talk Latin, dress in satin, and fry pound cake for luncheon—"

"Tis not so nice," sang Bessy, joining in, "as water-ice, but does quite well to munch on."

"Well, tell me this," cried Charlotte. "Why is Miss Brown like a mathematical point? Give it up? Because she has position, but not magnitude!" Unanimity of opinion on this subject restored harmony; but, under cover of the sparring, Hester had slipped away, only to meet a fresh swarm in another place, however.

"How thankful I ought to be," said one little piece, "that I was born in a civilized country and not among cannibals. I might have been just such a little fuwy, as Miss Brown says."

"You haven't such great cause for gratitude, after all, then," said Marcia, as she walked up and down conning her Psalm.

"It's fortunate for you, March, that *you* are not obliged to do penance by holding your tongue; you'd burst! Tell us, are they Catholics, to do penance, down in those South Sea places? I thought they were heathen."

"What a wicked girl you are, Dora! The heathen aren't half so wicked."

"Oh, we forgot what you are doing, Marcia! Of course you ought to know about the heathen, how they rage and imagine vain things, when you are studying the Psalms so!"

"Now, look here, young women, I've just one word to say to you. Those of you that want to learn to swim this year had better keep civil tongues in your heads when with the swimming mistress."

And then they all groaned at Marcia, and little unregenerate Hester, who would have liked to slap them every one, had to steal away for fear she should do it. She had called to mind her old promise to Maud many times that day.

Nor did Hester dare stay a moment where Marcia was, or accept a caress from her, or let her lock her arms in hers; for all that seemed to her a tacit violation of the understanding that she was to receive no companionship. But she got her own Bible and thought it no wrong to study the same Psalm, at any rate.

"She's March's private property, this swimming mistress," said Fanny Doane, joining the new group. "What character of Frederika Bremer's do you suppose she thinks Marcia's like? I know you won't guess it. Why, *Ma chère mère*, of course!"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Fanny

Doane!" said Marcia Meyer, laughing, and provoked, and burying her nose in her chapter again.

"I am," said Fanny, "and I came on purpose to kiss and make friends. I won't tease you any more, Hester." And then there was a little love-feast of reconciliations, in which, although doubtful if she might, Hester laughed, her white teeth shining in her pretty brown face, but otherwise she kept a resolute silence.

Long before night, Hester, who had a great verbal memory, had learned the Psalm so that she could have said it backward on requirement. Marcia, however, was still wrestling with it when called upon by Miss Brown for recital; and she came down from her lofty back seat to a desk, as it happened, quite near the one where Hester humbly sat.

Marcia got through the opening very well, tripped, but recovered herself, on the third verse, "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips," lost her way with, "The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside," stumbled again, and broke down altogether, on, "Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked:

further not his wicked device." She looked up and she looked down, stood first on one foot and then on the other, was ready with a reply to Miss Brown's reprimand for her awkward position, but could n't for the life of her recall the words. "Oh, my goodness gracious me," Hester could hear her whispering to herself, "what in the world is it?"

"Miss Meyer," said Miss Brown, "I will give you two minutes in which to wecall it. At the end of that time, if you cannot say it, you will go to your seat, and have no supper till you have learned both this and the next Psalm."

It was trembling on Hester's lips, "Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked." Where would be the harm of her saying it over? But as she longed to do it, the words seemed to start out in letters of fire before her eyes; she felt that her desire to say them over so that Marcia could hear *was* a desire of the wicked, it was a violation of her promise to Miss Marks. But yet she knew that, failing, Marcia was to be punished, and that would be agony to her. "Hester, you little goose, why don't you prompt me?" came a very distinct whisper that made every drop of blood forsake her

face. And all at once, seeing that if it had not been for her evil temper Marcia would not have had the verses to commit any way, and that now Marcia was to be punished still more because, owing to the consequences of that evil temper, beyond anything else, she could not be prompted, the thing suddenly became more than she could bear, and the words seemed to explode from her mouth as she cried out sharply, "Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked ; further not his wicked device !" clapped her hands over her lips, stood up, and then fell back in her seat with a dazed and swimming sensation that she was about to receive sentence of death : she had broken her word, she had broken the rules, and she had not helped Marcia.

She was mistaken ; she had helped Marcia very much indeed. " Oh, yes, Miss Brown," said that young lady glibly. " I should have said it myself in time." And before Miss Brown could recover from her indignant surprise and restore the tittering girls to order, Marcia had spun along and finished the Psalm.

" I will settle with Miss Stanley by and by,"

said Miss Brown; "but as for you, Miss Meyer, I don't *know* whether you would have said it yourself or not, and am in doubt as to whether I ought not to demand the other Psalm of you."

"I don't suppose you mean to doubt my word, any way, Miss Brown," said Marcia, with immense dignity. "It's absurd to think I could n't have said it in time, — I did n't say how much time. And as for the other Psalm, certainly I was not sent here to commit the Bible to memory, and a whole day, as it is, has been lost from my education by this Sunday-school exercise —"

"Take your seat, Miss Meyer," said Miss Brown, exasperated out of all patience; "and to-morrow you will be pwepared with one hundwed additional lines in your Virgil!" Marcia went to her seat snapping her thumbs and fingers defiantly as her hands hung by her side; and half an hour afterward she slammed her Virgil down on the desk, so that all the school could see that she had read the lines, — translation and Virgil being mere pleasure to Marcia.

CHAPTER IX.

"I DON'T know what I am to do," said Miss Brown despondently, that night in Miss Marks's parlor. "I am weally tempted to leave the school. I seem to be out of place. I cannot master that Marcia Meyer, try what I will; the heaviest task is play to her."

"My dear Miss Brown," said Miss Marks gently, "why attempt to master the young ladies?"

"You don't mean to let them —"

"I mean, if you will excuse my saying so, that if the girls felt you a little more their friend, and not so much their —"

"That's just where it is! I can't be the fwiend of such a little pack of wavening wolves as some of these girls are! They ought to be in cages."

Miss Marks laughed, even though disapproving such strong expression. "Not quite so bad as

that," she said. "They are only gay children, full of animal spirits, needing to be led rather than controlled. Of course I don't want to interfere with your method; but did you never think that instead of correcting them before each other and setting them tasks in what they consider a vindictive way, it might be better sometimes to see them privately, and reason with them a little, state your difficulties, and rather enlist them on your side? Girls have a great deal of chivalry, if I may use the word in connection with them, and if they once fairly understood the difficulties of your position, confided by you yourself, I think they would make it a matter of feeling and honor not to increase them."

"I dare say you are wight, Miss Marks," said Miss Brown, growing only more melancholy; "but I've such an irwitable temper, it's about impossible."

"Then," said Miss Marks, smiling, "you ought to take that temper in hand, first of all. I did mine."

"Oh, you never *had* any temper, Miss Marks," said Miss Brown gloomily. "You were born a saint, and —"

"Indeed, you must not talk so," said Miss Marks, with a sigh. "Once I was as hot-headed as Hester. Speaking of Hester —"

"Well, there, Miss Marks, I must say I think you are mistaken. That child is as deep as she is violent."

"I am sure she is not. I think I understand her perfectly, and you may leave her to me entirely. At any rate, I will attend to her myself concerning this last affair."

And that is how it came to pass that the subject of her latest outburst was never mentioned to Hester at all, Miss Marks feeling that, in the overwrought state of her nerves, it had been something beyond the child's mastery, and that the immediate thing to do was to strengthen her self-control.

But Hester felt it a case of severely letting her alone, and that the absence of rebuke was but an expression of the contempt her conduct deserved; and she went about her tasks next day in sorrow and shame.

But she was not a person to be long in gloom; her mercurial temperament lifted her soon over

her difficulties, and in a day or two she found it no particular reason for unhappiness that she could not talk with the girls, with the exception of Marcia; and she kept well out of Marcia's way, fearing that even a kiss might be speech between them. She learned her lessons; and then she took her little guitar and went wandering through the garden and down to the shore for recreation. There was something touching in the lonely figure of the little creature going up and down the garden aisles among the flowers; but, after a little, she was not at all sad, and presently was living in a world of her own, a world peopled by the beings of the stories told to her by Marcia in the two days before the play, — the fairies of English and German legends. She had read the poem of the "Culprit Fay," too; and she was enacting it in countless varying ways quite by herself, sending herself with her guitar on all sorts of romantic quests for desired star-beams and magical drops of dew, and coming back to receive her meed of the Fairy Queen, temporarily residing in a great rose-bush; sometimes accounting for a crack in the frescoing of the school-room wall by con-

sidering it as a hidden door into fairyland, beyond which all the wonders and splendors of her imagination were stored; and often searching the grass-plots for traces of the rings in which the elves had danced over night. Sometimes, too, she went down to the water's edge, remembering the great supernatural beings of the stories of the islands whence she came; but they were on a grander scale, living under those southern waters of all delicious hues, and, until she read Tennyson's *Sea Fairies*, did not please her fancy like these tiny elves that she could picture dancing on the tips of the grass-blades, swinging on the grape-tendrils, and drinking honey from the honeysuckle's horns.

I suppose Marcia divined a little what was going on in Hester's mind, for she talked about it to Miss Marks, and one day Miss Marks left in Hester's way a volume of *Shakspeare* open at the play of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Of course it caught her eye, for when you are thinking of anything all your senses seem to be on the alert about it, and in a few minutes she was as good as buried in the book, first going through it laboriously, and then, again, with delighted and dis-

tracted haste, — the rest of the play a matter of small moment, but the fairy scenes her own revelry.

All at once it occurred to Hester that she was having a very good time; that this was a singular way of punishing herself for a burst of temper; that she must no more enjoy the society of fairies than of other people, and even her guitar was a voice, listening to which was like breaking her promise. She shut the book and put her guitar away, and took double tasks in her lesson-books, and lived through such an exceedingly dreary day that when, on Sunday, — Miss Marks having gone with them quietly to church in the morning, — they were given over to Miss Brown's charge for the afternoon service, bent on mischief, if it were Sunday, and that lady marshalled them with her parasol, calling to this one and beckoning to that, running first on one side and then on another, as Marcia said, "like a distracted hen with a lot of ducklings," the walk, which was wont to be a very unpleasant performance to Hester, seemed to her like the most cheerful and amusing of picnics.

But when night came, and she lay in bed, Hester felt a great serenity within herself to think how sincerely she had endeavored to do right. It seemed to her that little Maud was standing by her pillow and smiling upon her. She wanted to whisper to her that she was certainly trying to meet her in heaven,—but then that would have been just as bad as speaking to Marcia.

On Wednesday Miss Marks sent for Hester. “Well,” she said pleasantly, “you have been in fairyland, it seems.”

“Oh, Miss Marks, I know it was wrong! And I left off amusing myself on Saturday, and if you think I ought to make up the days —”

“My dear child, one can be as morbid and unwise in punishing one’s self as in anything else. No, indeed, we have had quite enough of that. But what if I should tell you that your fairy stories are all true,—that there *is* a Puck who really can put a girdle round the earth, and in less than forty minutes; that there is one of the great genii who takes you on his back and swims through the Atlantic with you; that things go on in this world much as if these fairies did them; that there are

little unseen powers like elves running up and down the sunbeams every day to make the flowers and grasses and to color the clouds; that there are three of these unseen powers always to be found in the air, two of them always to be found in every drop of water —”

“Miss Marks!”

“Yes, indeed; and the names of the two are oxygen and hydrogen. As you improve, so that you can take up chemistry and natural philosophy, to say nothing of geology and astronomy, you will find that science is one long fairy tale, full of things that seem just as impossible and wondrous as the things done in the fairy stories of the books.”

“Oh, Miss Marks,” cried Hester, with sparkling eyes, “do you believe I ever shall improve?”

CHAPTER X.

IT was wearing towards the long vacation, and Hester had had no word from her father yet. It was unaccountable to her; but still she trusted him so that she felt everything he did would come out right. Even to Miss Marks it seemed singular, although she said nothing. Miss Brown contented herself with remarking to the other teachers that it was lucky the man had paid not merely the half-yearly bills in advance, but the whole year's, and left a sum of money for contingencies besides, — a thing of which Hester herself never thought, as, not yet worrying too much at her father's silence, she had skipped about the halls and gardens with Marcia, when she might.

“How you do follow Marcia round!” said Miss Park good-naturedly, as the child came dancing down the grass one day in recreation.

“Oh, I love her so!” exclaimed Hester.

"She means," said Dora, "that she is so proud to be noticed by her —"

Hester suddenly stayed her little dancing feet. "I proud — proud to be noticed — to be noticed by any of you!" she cried, her face growing dark and her eyes dangerous in one of her sudden passions. "I! I, who am waited on at home by the daughters of princes —"

"Come, come, Hester!" said Miss Park, "recollect yourself. It is something for you to be proud of when a girl in one of the advanced classes chooses you for a friend, — you, hardly out of your primer. As for what you just said, princes would be no better than other people if they were here; not so good, in fact, if they had no education and wore no clothes to speak of, like most of your South Sea Island princes. The only rank in this country is given by education, as I heard Miss Marks tell you."

And while Miss Park's mild voice ran on, the color began to leave Hester's face and the sparkle her eye.

"Don't you agree with me?" said Miss Park.

"I suppose you must be right," said Hester,

with a trembling tone. "You have always seemed to be, I remember. I suppose I am not the equal of anybody here; but I never thought of being proud about Marcia. I love her so!"

Then Miss Park put her finger under Hester's chin, as Marcia had once done, tipping the pretty dark face to the light, and kissing the red lips. "I don't know about your not being the equal of anybody here," she said. "When I find your superior in some things, I will let you know."

After that there was something touching in Hester's new humility as she hovered round Marcia, till Fanny Doane, who often seemed to love a bit of mischief-making herself, told the latter of Dora's malice, and Marcia laughed at Hester for her pains, and told Dora what she thought of her.

"Education!" said Marcia, "there are all sorts of educations. I can extract the cube of that ball of butter without winking, but can I speak French—the most enlightened language on earth, Madame Cherdidi says—like a native, as Hester does, if I'm in forty advanced classes? Can I dance and draw as Hester does, and play on the guitar,

and embroider — oh, what an idiot you are, Dora Jepson!”

Yet, although Hester had begun to be so happy, it grew to be a great drawback to her happiness that day by day went by and still no word came from her father. She could not understand it; but she felt that if she could only do something to please him, she would be so much nearer to him. And she did her utmost at all her tasks, and the quires, so to say, of laborious script that she despatched by mail to him filled up a great deal of her time, and cultivated her handwriting. She learned very quickly, although sometimes she forgot as quickly; and a reward of merit that Miss Marks allowed her was permission to go into the laboratory during the chemical experiments to see water boil in a sheet of paper, or chlorine bleach a spray of rose-leaves, or else to listen to the recitation of the class in astronomy.

She needed no more than the hint she got, as she listened, concerning the wrong side of the moon, that side which is never turned to us, to people it with all the immaterial creatures of her fancy; and when she saw it rising, round and

radiant through the mellow mist above the garden, it seemed to her the very abode and resting-place of all her sprites.

She told Marcia about it during the study hour in which they were not in full school discipline, but were supposed to be studying, with liberty now and then to speak to one another on the subject of their studies, and with a single teacher present to keep order, and Marcia read to her in a whisper the ballad of Tam O'Shanter, —

“The piper loud and louder blew,
The dancers quick and quicker flew,” —

nothing of which did Hester comprehend but its procession of witches and warlocks, and the punishment Marcia received for reading it.

“The idea,” said the irrepressible Marcia, then, “of sending a person to bed for twenty-four hours for reading a classic! I have heard my father call it so. Not but that I had just as lief go to bed, for we are always hustled up so in the morning that I think every girl in the school would enjoy it —”

“Miss Meyer! I weally shall weport you —”

“There's a great smooch on your cheek, Miss Brown,” said Marcia coolly.

"No, the other one," as, without thinking, Miss Brown passed her hand over her left cheek.

"So unfortunate," said Marcia, with all the impertinence she could muster; "now it's on both!" And all the girls tittered, for poor Miss Brown's fingers, which were always sharpening pencils, always bore the traces of their work. And then Marcia marched off to bed in triumph.

As Miss Brown hesitated, for a moment, between a desire to rush after Marcia and give her a good shaking, and her consciousness of the smooches on her face, Hester stood beside her, timidly offering a clean wet sponge, and murmuring, "Oh, if you please, Miss Brown, I think I ought to go to bed too"—and the next thing the child knew was a ringing box on the ear that sent her and her sponge flying.

For a moment, after regaining her balance, Hester stood and glared at Miss Brown, with her eyes flaming and both her hands thrust out. She was not conscious of anything till she began to feel that if she had been big enough she would have killed her. It was the first blow she had ever had.

Then her heart was beating furiously, and she was thinking, "This is what they call civilization! In my islands, I never saw a savage strike a slave!" And then she was white as ashes, remembering how horribly wicked she had been in that brief moment of passion, and was walking to her seat.

"Hester has learned to control her temper first," said Bella Brook quite audibly.

"Oh!" cried Miss Brown, slapping her book together, "I'd wather pick wags in the stweet than — than — Such a parcel —" And she rang the bell violently for Miss Park to take her place, and flounced out of the room. And Hester, asking to go out, went another way and washed her face as if she could never wash out the stain of that slap.

Something that night, after the lights were out, stole into Hester's bed.

"Hush, hush!" whispered Marcia, taking her in her arms. "I've crept all the way down the dormitory on my hands and knees, looking like one of your precious goblins, just to see you. You poor dear, so you had the slap she'd have liked to give me, the wretch! Why didn't you slap her back?"

“Oh, Marcia, Marcia, you know I deserved it, and oh, so much more! I was so wicked — I —”

The next moment something towered over the two, — a horrid spectre in spectacles, — and Miss Brown had seized Marcia, and with her clutch on her shoulder was tiptoeing her off to the shower-bath, where presently she might have been heard ignominiously gurgling and strangling and laughing and crying and coughing; and she was then, after the swift rubbing, given none too gently, conducted back to her bed, between the long double row of eager, anxious faces looking out from the curtained alcoves of the little cots.

“As for you,” said Miss Brown, standing with a light in her hand at the foot of Hester’s bed, “you are an evil spirwit in this school!”

“Oh, Miss Brown! Miss Brown! I did n’t mean to be!” said Hester, who had been sitting up straight in bed, blanched with horror at every fresh splashing and choking from Marcia and the bath-room.

When quiet and darkness were again restored, a voice rang out clearly over the startled and trembling dormitory, —

"You've punished me, Miss Brown, and you've punished Hester, in a very outrageous way. Now we're going to punish you. If Miss Marks knew of your slapping Hester and half-drowning me, she'd turn you out of this school as quick as winking. All those girls who are more my friends than yours will do what I wish; and we shall punish you by never telling her a word about it. I don't envy you. Oh, Miss Brown!"

And as a simultaneous groan burst from the surrounding throats in the darkness, Miss Brown was really not an object of envy. To speak after the lights were out in the dormitory was open rebellion indeed, but it would have done no good for Miss Brown to read the Riot Act itself, and for the first time in her life she held her peace; if she could be said to have any peace.

"The horrid thing!" said Margaret Payson the next day, when Miss Brown had unmercifully ridiculed her equation on the blackboard. "I wish — oh, I wish — I wish she'd go a missionary to the South Sea Islands!"

Hester heard her, and her heart stood still; not at the sneer in Margaret's words so much, but at

the dreadful picture all at once presented to her imagination, of Miss Brown in that paradise, which, when all things went adversely to her here, seemed to her like Tennyson's

"Summer isles of Eden, lying in dark purple spheres of sea,"
a place in which to escape from all her troubles.

And then she remembered that she herself was to be, if not exactly a missionary, yet, at any rate, a teacher among those South Sea Islands — and what if she carried there just such a spirit as Miss Brown's! Not all Miss Marks's angelic goodness had such influence with Hester as that one thought. And she resolved that, come what might, she would make herself as unlike Miss Brown as possible.

And yet how those miraculous mathematics rolled off the tips of Miss Brown's fingers on the blackboard! What industry she had! How faithful she was to her work! One should be like her in these things, surely, — and how to be like and unlike Miss Brown was a difficult problem for Hester to solve.

But whether it was right or wrong, like Miss Brown or unlike her, Hester could not help grieving over Marcia, who lay in bed all that beautiful

summer day, or stepped stealthily round the empty dormitory, without work or books, conscious how badly her poor Rafe would feel if he knew it, and seeing the yearly prize receding farther and farther from her grasp and going nearer to Charlotte or Bella.

As for Bessy Byrnes and Fanny Doane and the undistinguished rest, Hester had, without knowing it, such a contempt for their calibre that it did not occur to her they had eyes big enough to see a prize, let alone powers equal to the winning of it.

For herself, it never once entered her head that she could compete for it,—a fine prize, let whoever would have it; a little gold watch, given, as Miss Marks said, not as a piece of finery, but to teach its winner the value of time.

“As if I didn’t know the value of time!” said Marcia, when, next day, her term of punishment having expired, they all happened to be in the garden talking of the chances for the prize. “As if I didn’t know the value of time, with Charlotte and Bella abreast of me, and Margaret almost out of sight, and I shut up for twenty-four hours without a book or a slate or anything but a pin and

my thumb-nail! Now I must study all play-time to make up for it. The hatefulness of that Brownie!"

That it could possibly be any hatefulness of her own which was at fault, Marcia did not hint. "Now if you speak to me for a week," she said, "I shall take it as a sign that you don't want me to have the prize —"

"We won't, March! we won't," cried half a dozen voices.

"And if Margaret Payson does get that watch, I shall just die of envy. Oh my, how particular she'll be about her hours! We shall all get the time by her second-hand, and she'll wear the watch thin by taking it out and putting it in — if she does n't wear it as a locket! It's bad enough to have Charlotte get it — but Margaret!"

"What will you do with it, March, if you get it?" asked Charlotte.

"Put it away so carefully I shan't see it more than once a year — with my logic and algebra," she said.

"Well, if I can't get it, I hope you may. But Margaret says she's bound to have it, for her aunt

told her she should n't have another dress this year if she came home without it."

"Poor thing! how disgracefully she'll look! She has only about a dozen dresses now."

"Well, I'm bound to have it, too, if I can get it," said Charlotte. "So look out, March!"

"I suppose, young ladies," said Miss Park, whose presence the girls had forgotten as she walked up and down the paths among them, "that you remember the terms of this prize concerning which you are talking in such an unlovely manner,—that it is not for scholarship alone, but for general personal excellence and improvement and deportment?"

"No, I never!" said Dora impudently.

"Then you had better now," said Miss Park, with some severity, for her. "The child who never fails in her primer, and has no bad marks in her deportment, will rank higher for the prize than the girl who fails every week in her algebra and chemistry. Little May Roberts may pass you all yet!"

"Oh, I shall never get it then!" groaned Marcia. "And I should so like to have it. It would please mamma so much, and she is always sick, and

does n't have a great deal to please her. Why *need* I be so wicked?"

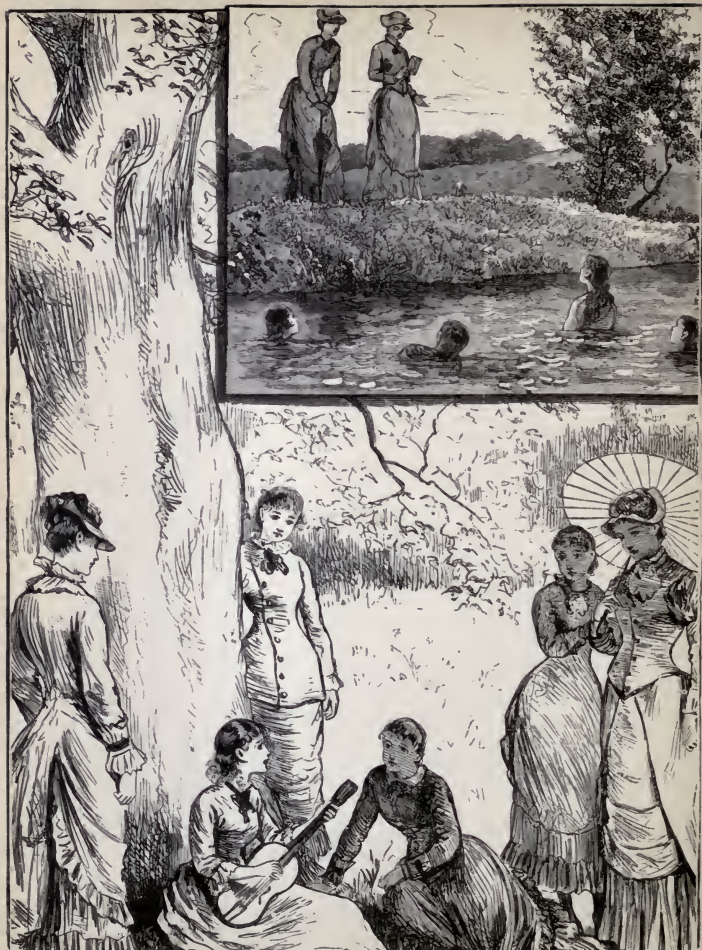
"Conundrum," said Charlotte.

Hester looked on wistfully, longing to do something to help Marcia, and painfully aware of the difference between Marcia's studies and her own simple and elementary lessons that she recited privately, for the most part, to Miss Marks or to Madame Cherdidi. The poor Madame was delighted to attend to them for the sake of hearing her native tongue spoken as Hester could speak it, having long had her at her own table to help the others who were obliged to speak French there during the dinner-hour.

"Even you could take a prize for the French, my dear," she would say.

And Hester would reply, "I might as well take a prize for my breathing."

But Hester used to wish there were no such things as prizes, in those long bright days when Marcia went about with her nose in a book, and her only really pleasant hour of the whole twenty-four was the swimming-hour.



"A number of the girls came dancing down, and happened to stop where Hester sat on the grass under the great beech-tree."—PAGE 131.

CHAPTER XI.

A NUMBER of the girls came dancing down in the afternoon recreation, and happened to stop where Hester sat on the grass under the great beech-tree, thrumming on her little guitar some of the melancholy half-tunes of her island people's music.

"A penny for your thoughts, Hester," said Miss Park, — who usually kept an oversight of the girls during that hour, — coming round and sitting down beside her, with an open scrap-book in her hand.

"I was thinking of my islands," said Hester, who could not talk freely about her father.

"Do all your islanders play on the guitar?" asked Marcia, as the girls threw themselves down on the grass.

"Almost all, a little, this way."

"And do they all swim as well as you? How did you happen to swim so, Hester?" asked Bella.

"Why, I always did," said Hester. "They just throw the babies into the water, out there, and they —"

"Flop about and swim away like tadpoles, I suppose," said Marcia. "I wonder if our baby could."

"Sometimes the women go into the water and float with the babies on their backs; and the — the common people, when they are washing the clothes, they just bury the babies' feet in the sand; that keeps them safe and lets them splash in the water, — oh, it is such beautiful water!"

"Beautiful water! as if there was any difference!" said Margaret Payson.

"Is it really more beautiful than this, Hester?" asked Marcia.

"Oh, when the sun falls into it," cried Hester, with her face aglow, "and the sea-weed shines up through it, you would think it was melted jewels! Such sky-blue with a silver dust through it! Such crimson, such pale green, such sparkles of

fire! Oh, yes, too beautiful beside these still, dark waters! But everything is so much more beautiful out there," said Hester, with a sigh.

"Tell us all about out there, Hester. Mayn't she, Miss Park?" cried one or two.

"Yes, do!"

"And it will be quite like a geography lecture," said Marcia.

"Well, Hester," said the gentle Miss Park, "to begin with, what should we see if we suddenly found ourselves floating in the harbor of the island you came from?"

"You would see," said Hester eagerly, and with a flush on her cheek, for she had never spoken in this way of her dear islands to any but Marcia,—"you would see the bay, lying in a long curve like a horse-shoe, and the foam always flying high on the two points of the curve. And all along the shore palm-trees would be waving like great plumes, and people would be walking under them, and some of the people would be bare and brown like Miss Marks's statuette of—of—"

"Mercury," said Miss Park.

"And some in long, flowing white gowns; and

here and there would be white cottages, and here and there would be bamboo ones, with all the sides rolled up, and half-covered by orange and lemon trees; and back of them would be hedges full of scarlet pomegranate flowers; and still back of them the great green mountains with silver threads of brooks, and cataracts, and deep blue valleys half-way up their sides."

"Did you ever go up the valleys?" asked Miss Park.

"Oh, yes indeed, many times, — many. There was a lovely cocoa-palm that leaned out over one of them, so tall, so straight, so green; and you know before the merchants and missionaries went there every family had a god —"

"Had a god!" said Margaret.

"Yes, a god to worship, just as much as it had a name; and every child had one, too. And when a baby was born it was given a god of some kind, and sometimes this god lived in a bird, sometimes in a snake, and sometimes in a flower; and, whatever it lived in, the person whose god it was could not pick it if it was a flower, or eat it, or hurt it, or that person would change into the

thing, — the bird, or snake, or flower, you know. And once there was a lovely young girl, do you believe, who picked a green cocoa-nut — oh, they are so delicious, all full of soft, sweet, cool, white juice, you know — and she was so thirsty — and she ate it. And her god was in the cocoa-nut. And all at once she felt stiff, and she could not move; and she began to grow taller and taller, and her hair began to grow longer and longer, and wave and wave — ”

“How perfectly ridiculous!” said Margaret, as Hester stood forgetfully acting out the tragedy.

“And she changed into a cocoa-palm,” said Hester.

“You don’t believe it!” said Charlotte quite earnestly. And then all the girls, and Hester too, laughed at her.

“I used to believe it. I used to love to go up there and see her; and once I tied a ribbon round her stem.”

“I should think you believed it now,” said Margaret scornfully, and as if, in fact, she were a little displeased that Hester should be an object of so much interest.

"Don't mind her, don't mind her, Hester," said Charlotte.

"And I used to think that Mafuie really made the mountains smoke when he stirred his fire," continued Hester, obeying Charlotte, although her cheek flushed, "and that he made the earthquakes when he walked across the island. I used to tremble and be frightened to sleep by Moso's and Sepo's names, and I would have said my prayers to the great Tangaloa, as my nurse did, if papa had not found out and sent me to the nun's school,—that is, whenever I would go."

"A perfect pagan!" said Margaret, and not quite under her breath either; "and I always said so."

"It's well to be perfect in anything!" said Marcia.

"You'd better try it, then!" retorted Margaret.

"And what did the people do, Hester?" asked Miss Park quickly, to cover Margaret's voice, if she could.

"Oh, they sang! They sang when they were at work, and they sang when they were at play,—sing-song, pleasant tunes. They sing in their skiffs in the sun at sea, and they sing as they

sit in the moonlight at home. There is always a loud, sweet song somewhere to be heard. Oh, if I could only hear it!" cried the child. "When they talk, their voices sound like songs," she added, pausing and looking far away, as if she were listening for them now. "They dress themselves with flowers," continued Hester, "the women do; blossoms in their ears, necklaces of jasmines, and flowers braided in their hair, — flowers you never saw! Oh, you would like to see the dancers in the moonlight; the fishers on the reef with the sun on them; the swimmers on the sea with their long hair floating on the slow wave; the green parrots, the rosy flamingoes; to breathe the air, nothing but softness, nothing but sweet smells; to hear the low voices! And they are so kind, so gentle, oh, much, much kinder than the people here!"

"The idea! Those half-naked savages!" said Margaret again. Hester turned on her with a quick gesture.

"Do they have any books?" asked Miss Park hurriedly.

Hester waited a moment, swallowing her wrath.

"Oh, yes," she answered then, "missionary books. But they don't need them," said Hester, with an air; "for every prince, every chief, has his Talking Man, and the Talking Man knows everything. He is a book of history himself, — fathers hand it down to sons, you see. I don't quite see why papa thinks this way is better. Certainly life is pleasanter out there. Oh, I could sit all night and hear the Talking Men! They know what makes the days so long in summer. For once, they say, they were shorter, but there was a mother whose boy was called the Child of the Sun, and who grew so strong that when he found the sun rose and set so fast that there was not time enough to dry his mat and his mother's, he made up his mind to make the sun go slower. So he climbed a tree in the night, and with a rope in his hand waited for his father; and the moment the great sun rose, the boy threw his rope and snared him. And then the sun begged for mercy, but the boy would not let him go till he had his promise; and ever since then the sun moves slower, and the days are longer, — but the sun burned all the children of that boy brown."

"Dear me!" said Margaret, "what extraordinarily silly stories!"

"Do be still, Margaret, can't you?" said Charlotte.

"The fancies of a primitive people," said Miss Park, the peacemaker, "are very interesting. You see that accounts for the color of the islanders."

"I should think things would have seemed strange to you at San Francisco, Hester."

"So they did. The big guns, as we came into port, with their great flashes of fire and their bellying, echoing voices, were so different from our guns out there; the people all in such a hurry; and the horses, then the horses!"

"Why?"

"Why, I'd never seen a horse, you know. And most of all, the gas, — to think of turning a handle, and fire spurting out of the wall! No, but most of all — most of all was snow. As we crossed the mountains, a cloud of snow, papa said it was, came and wrapped us; and first I thought the sky had broken and come down, and then I thought the air was full of feathers."

"And do you want to go back there?" asked Bella.

"Want to go back there!" cried Hester. "Do I want to go to heaven? And, besides, I am to teach them all I learn here."

"Teach them!" laughed Margaret. "What a learned set they will be!"

"But do you really think, Hester," said Miss Park, with some hesitation, on account of Margaret's rudeness, "that the story about the Child of the Sun, for instance, is better than the real knowledge as to why the days are longer in summer, that you heard the girls in astronomy telling of yesterday?"

"No," said Hester. "No — I don't suppose I do. But it's lovely living, — with no tasks, — and all so pleasant —"

"But you don't think we were made to live without tasks, and just for the sake of the pleasantness?" said Miss Park. "I always think we are not to stay resting and contented, but are to be climbing. I always think that we are here to help each other up into the light; to learn all about nature till we know how to make everything serve us and lift us, winds and waters and sun and stars; to make life better and easier for the next that

come after us, and the happy life to come surer. Your islanders have a very good time certainly, but they seem to me like butterflies."

"I've often thought I should like to be a butterfly," said Marcia, fearing facts bore too hardly on Hester.

"So has many an idle schoolgirl before; and butterflies are all very well as far as they go. They are objects of beauty; but there is another sort of beauty, a beauty of the soul, and it seems to me a chief end is to make our souls beautiful in God's eyes. And how can that be if we are just enjoying our senses, as these gentle savages are, and letting our souls and our intellects spindle and wither?"

"Don't they ever fight, Hester?" asked Marcia.

"Once in a great while," she answered, rather loath to admit it. "Then there is a rebellion, or a little war, and swarms of canoes and arrows and spears and guns. They never take any prisoners, I heard papa say, for they never give any quarter; but when night comes they leave off, and if they are out of ammunition, the two armies borrow it of each other, — of their enemies, you know."

"I should think they were a lot of children," said Margaret.

"Well," said Miss Park, "it is natural that you should love your old home, Hester. Yet I think the time will come when you will realize that those who know the most concerning the kingdoms and the peoples, those who know the most concerning the Creator's method in making the heavens and earth, to say nothing of those who know his true worship, have rendered themselves a higher order of beings than if they had just spent their lives dancing and singing. And if to that they add the virtues of your islanders too, their kindness and love and gentleness, then they are most satisfactory to the heavenly eyes as rounded and perfect things. Is n't that so?"

"All this talk," muttered Margaret, "about those creatures only one remove from the beasts of the field!"

Hester's little fist clenched, after all her long forbearance, and when she opened her hand the marks of her nails were printed on the palms; but she still took no notice of Margaret.

"May be it is," she said, a little ruefully. "For

papa thinks so, I believe ; but it's — it's awfully pleasant down there on the other side of the world."

"I have been reading a little story about it," said Miss Park, "which I pasted into my scrap-book ; and I brought it with me, thinking some of you might like to hear it —"

"Oh, yes, read it, please read it, Miss Park!" came a chorus.

"It is a true story," said Miss Park. "The lady who wrote it heard it from the Prince Mamea, when he was in this country —"

"Why, I know him!" said Hester.

"Then you know a noble gentleman, if he is ever so dark. Perhaps you know the story, too. It is called 'Sae of Samoa.'"

"Perhaps so," said Hester ; "but there are lots of Saes."

And then Miss Park opened her book and read : *

"Many days' sail from the western shores of our own land lies the land of little Sae, — Samoa, — a group of islands, the largest of which is but little more than threescore miles long and a half-score broad, — islands where the coral worm and the volcano have wrought together, and that sun and seas have clothed in per-

* From "Harper's Bazar."

petual beauty and warmth. If any one doubts concerning this beauty, let him ship from San Francisco on board the stanch schooner *Petrel*, and be on deck some day, after a month of days has passed, and see the sight that greets him in the long bend of the shore fringed with the feathery cocoa-palms, and backed by the burnished shadow of the orange-trees, thickets all aflame with flowers, white cottages and brown huts here and there along the beach, people moving in the shadow of the groves, these bare and shining, those in loose white linen, and, far back, the land rising slowly with long undulations till there are green and woody mountains towering thousands of feet above the sea, penetrated by lovely and inviting valleys, with water falling down the steep in little more than a vapor, but flowing on and broadening till it empties into the bay as the river Sigago. Out into the sea, on either side, wade the great reefs where the surf plays in snow and silver, and around the *Petrel* the water will be swarming with dark shapes eager to get aboard with friendly words."

"Oh," cried Hester, her eyes kindling, her face wreathed with joyous smiles, "that is it exactly! Oh, I wish you could see it! That is it exactly! Oh, it carries me back!"

"But these shapes are those of a different order of people from little Sae's; she was a great chief's daughter, and they are the people of the villages who do a great chief's bidding. Yet little Sae never saw a vessel

coming into the bay, that she did not leave her play to see also if by any chance her dear brother were aboard ; for Avia, her brother, was of a roaming sort, and whether he had run from his lessons, or whether any sailor had stolen him away in a ship, none knew, — sailing gods, the islanders used in old times to call those who touched at the place in ships. Almost everything was sacred and a god to some one or other of these islanders — ”

“ You see, Margaret ! ” cried Hester.

“ Now you see, Margaret ! ” echoed Bella.

“ Even the birds of the air, into which Sae used often to wish she might change and fly away and find Avia. The upper gods used to live in birds, and if a bird were ever picked up dead, the whole island turned out, weeping and wailing, and, wrapping the bird in finest mats, they buried it with great lamentation. It was not gods who had been men, and who had been exalted on account of their great deeds, that dwelt in birds, — they were in fire and wind and sea.

“ Sae did not care for any of these gods. She liked to hear about them, as we like to hear about the fairies. She still had a little creeping sensation, however, when any one mentioned Moso ; for Moso was a terrible being, although no worse than Sepo. The first thing that Sae had ever learned to repeat was the old exclamation of the people, a frequent one to little children, *Aina oe a Sepo* — May Sepo eat you ! But Sae called

herself a Christian child, and said she believed in none of these things, although she had really seen a house built by one of the old gods, and did not know what to make of that — *Le fale o Le Fee* — The house of Le Fee ; it was ten miles from where she lived, built of hewn stone laid with mortar, and Le Fee, a powerful god, who, when he walked, made the earth tremble and the trees droop and the rivers foam, built it to show his dominion over all the train of lesser gods who were his slaves, and made these gods bring stone to raise the walls and coral to pave the floors, and sound neither of hammer, axe, nor saw was heard while its walls rose ; and Le Fee lounged and looked on, till suddenly a greater god stood before him, and challenged him to combat ; and, being whipped without mercy, Le Fee fled out beyond the outer reefs, and still lives in the storms of the sea. Sae thought it was probably the god she worshipped who conquered Le Fee. Before her father became a Christian, always previous to the evening meal he made an offering of fire to all the heavenly powers ; and when the fire was lighted, he would say, ‘This light is for you, O King, and gods superior and inferior!’ sometimes ending with the words, ‘Great gods and human gods, be not angry if any are forgotten!’

“But all this was over now, and little Sae went every day to the missionary school. Before she went, however, her little black head, with its beautiful long hair, was plastered thick with lime made from the coral

reefs, and after a while she went down to the sea to wash it off. This was for cleanliness — ”

“ Yes, they all do so ! ” again interrupted Hester, her face still expressing her joy. “ They have to do it, with such thick hair as they have under such a hot sun.”

“ There were people in the bush, that is, in the woods and thickets, whose hair was so thick and coarse that it stood out straight till their heads were the size of a bushel basket. This lime gave the hair a reddish tinge in time, and although the faces on the islands were dark, there were many people with hair which was almost golden. It was no trouble to wash the lime off ; for from the time that she was born Sae had known how to swim in the soft warm waters of the Pacific seas. The mothers and the nurses went into the water with the babies on one arm or sitting astride the neck — ”

“ I told you they did ! ” cried Hester again triumphantly.

“ Well, who said they didn't ? ” asked Margaret.

“ And the tiny creatures, who could neither walk nor stand alone, would swim off like so many little frogs. Thus the water was just as familiar to the children of Samoa as the land ; and, as they hardly ever had any clothes to wet, they made nothing of diving in at any time. Sae never was so happy as when she was in the

sea or the river, whither she ran the moment her few lessons were over, not in the least afraid of the great sharks rolling outside the reef, but never venturing inside. As free in the water as a bird in the air, no fish could do anything that she could not do, — diving from the cliff, cutting through the surf, her little brown body slipping about beneath the surface, — and she would fairly have lived in it if her mother had not swum in after her and, tucking her under one arm, brought her ashore and taken her over to wash off the salt in the river; too long a stay in the water under the burning sun made the flesh swell and harden, till the legs became like an elephant's. At such times Sae envied the babies of the washerwomen, who, planted in the margin of the rivers so that they could not get away, were left to enjoy themselves. The color of the water in the pools and shallows was something that delighted little Sae's soul. In the deep —

“Oh, it *is* beautiful! And it seems as if I were there once more, Miss Park, while I hear you!”

“In the deep pools among the hollows of the reefs the gigantic sea-anemones, waving their tentacles through the blooming purples and flame-colors, made a change with every ripple of the tide. Sae used to fill these hollows, in her imagination, with shapes fit to dwell in the midst of such beauty —”

“I should think she was you, Hester,” laughed Marcia, in a half-whisper.

“But as it might have shocked the good missionaries if she had told of them, she kept the secret to herself; and when tired of playing that the lovely creatures were there, she used to float on the water and watch some fisherman, standing far out on the reef and throwing his long bamboo into the surf, all bare and brown and shining in the sun. There were always plenty of fish, of course, to be had in that place, and plenty of everything else, in fact. Sae was very fond of the wild pigeons that ate the green nutmegs till their flesh was flavored with them; and there were pigs and fowl and game, and yams and bread-fruit and oranges and pomegranates, pine-apples and guavas, and almost every fruit under heaven; but best of all she loved the green cocoa-nut, inside whose skin only a soft thin pulp had gathered, while the rest was filled with the cool delicious juice of the tree. Sae’s father had many thousand cocoa-nut-trees, and as each tree is thought to be worth a dollar a year, — oil being pressed from the dried meat of the nut, from which oil all our nicest soaps are made, — he would have been a very rich man had there been much money on the islands; as it was, he bartered his cocoa-nuts for such things as he needed. He was a powerful chief, and had many rights, all of which he did not exercise; as, for instance, if he wished for anything in the possession of his inferior, he could take it, and it was no theft. If any one caught a bonita in the water, it was brought to him or to his fellow-chiefs; the common people were not allowed to have such a

delicacy. Yet when these chiefs met any of the common people they paused and chatted together, and for the time being were equals.

“ But the proudest possession of Sae’s father was his Talking Man, — not exactly a possession either, but a follower, — for the Talking Men were next to the great chiefs themselves in importance. How many times Sae had heard this Fila-oma talk till it seemed to her that he made black appear white! And she thought her father’s Talking Man vastly superior to the one who talked for Asi’s father. These Talking Men held the place of books, — their memories being crammed with facts and fancies. They knew how the world first came about, and everything that had happened on the islands since; and Sae had sat entranced, listening to the words of the wise Fila-oma, yet she could never quite make out why each one had a different story to tell of the same thing, — the Talking Man of Asi’s father declaring that the islands were thrown up from the deep sea by the volcanoes, while their own Talking Man declared that here were once great people and great kingdoms; but the ice, drifting down from the north, had tipped up the earth and drowned out the old country, leaving nothing but the scattered spots above water which were the islands now; and that the old house of Le Fee, and the paved road across one of the islands, were all that was left of the work of those peoples and those kingdoms. Since the missionaries had come, some books had been printed in the

Samoa tongue ; Sae had learned to read from a Bible printed in Samoa. It needed but fourteen letters to print all their words, and those were but the vowels and f, g, l, m, n, p, s, t, v, — in fact, to hear a person speak in the Samoa tongue was like hearing music.

“To be sure, the native Samoa tunes were much alike, and as a rule the singers composed them while they sang, and the words too ; these singers sat in half-circles in the moonlight, and whatever came under their observation they wove into the song. But they did not rely on their own music ; their quick ears caught all the tunes that were going, from the sailors of the vessels in the harbor, catching the worst first, of course. Sae herself could whistle the last organ-grinder’s melody as well as any little ragamuffin of our streets ; but Asi’s sister, who was taught in the convent, could sing her part in Mozart’s Twelfth Mass — ”

“Oh, I must have heard her so often and often !” exclaimed Hester, forgetting everything but the story. Then the girls laughed kindly at her a little, and Miss Park went on :—

“The greater portion of the people sang all the time : when they were beating out the fibre for their mats their voices always rose in chorus ; with the first stroke of the oar, when any party of them were in the boat, the song began again, and usually a fresh one, for it

was almost impossible to speak, let alone to sing, in the soft sweet language, without making melodious rhythm and starting a new musical idea.

“But none of these things did Sae enjoy now as she used when Avia was with her, — neither the singing, nor the dancing, nor the listening to the Talking Man, nor the blowing of the pambo horn, nor the swimming, and not even the polulo-fishing, where, on the only two days in the year in which the polulo appeared, crowds of boats put out at daybreak, full of the wildest and most lawless merry-makers, to find the waters thick and alive with the polulo, which, singing and laughing and splashing, they fished up and dipped up and caught up in great masses like wriggling worms, and ate, either raw or baked in banana leaves, finding their taste a little like an oyster and a little like a crab, during all the gayest of gay days. None of these things now pleased Sae longer than a few minutes at a time. She was always thinking how pleasant it would have been if Avia had been with her; and Asi was nothing at all beside the memory of Avia. Avia used to help her everywhere, and he never had an enjoyment without her, nor a pleasure that he did not first divide with her. For in Samoa the men are always and everywhere, in private as well as in public, polite to the women, allowing them to make no exertion that they can make for them, insisting that they shall eat first, cooking for them if there is no inferior to do it; and Avia’s ambition led him always to try and do as he had seen

his father do, — all of which, of course, made life very agreeable to little Sae. It was partly this politeness of the Samoans, to be sure, together with a resemblance to the Latin of some of their words, which made many of the missionaries doubt the statements of all the Talking Men concerning the beginning of things in Samoa, and wonder if in those far-away early days, hundreds of years ago, when the Portuguese were the sailors of the world, some ship from Portugal to India had not blown far to the east, and foundered on these coral reefs, and peopled the land beyond. But Sae knew nothing of all that; she only knew some ship in these recent days had carried Avia away, and little she cared whether Portugal or the Indies first cradled her ancestors. She used to wonder where Avia was now, and long to know what he could be doing, if he had enough to eat, if he were wandering in some strange land, — perhaps in a land where they ate fat little boys, as they did, she knew, in Feejee. Drowned she was sure he never could be. Perhaps he was a slave in some foreign country, and he would grow up to be a man and never would be tattooed. And at that horrible thought Sae would burst into a wail of sorrow. Had not Asi's elder brother just been tattooed at a cost of some two thousand dollars? For it was mightily expensive, this tattooing, and the tattooer always made sure of his pay by demanding it in the middle of the operation, and if it was not given he ceased work, and the young man must thence go about half tattooed, the

derision of all the world. And yet that little mallet with its teeth hurt horridly ; and although a party went together, and but a little was done to each at a time, it was all they could do to endure it. It made them exceedingly ill, and they had to diet, and they came out after three months almost skeletons, but clothed in a fine lace-like tracery that covered their glossy skins like silken cobweb. And Asi's brother was wearing that, — and Avia never would have it ! Day by day it seemed more insupportable to Sae to think of all Avia was losing by his absence from home. She could not talk about him, for, on account of her mother, nobody mentioned his name. And at length it was more than Sae could any longer bear, and she determined to run away to sea herself, with the first opportunity. She was sure that she could find Avia and bring him home with her.

“Opportunity came very soon. She had not fairly turned the idea over in her mind when she saw a schooner — the little *Petrel* indeed — getting ready to pull up its anchor and run up its sails ; and when the wind began to fill those sails, and the *Petrel* went dipping and bending out beyond the long Mulinu Point, Sae was lying under a bundle of old ropes and sails ; and, although nearly stifled, she did not dare emerge till just as the land was sinking on the horizon. Then suddenly she saw there was no longer anything but a line — maybe the ghost of a palm-tree — of her beloved Upolu gleaming on the sea-level. Apia,

the town, had vanished, with all the lovely curves of the beach at Metautu, at Metafele, and Mulinu ; with the white houses of the consuls, the convent, and the church ; with the brown huts, made of reeds and thatched, the matting of the lofty sides rolled up for light and air ; the long avenues of palms, the people, the children, the dogs, the parrots, and paroquets, and hawk-billed pigeons, — they had all gone like a dream when one wakes, and Sae set up a loud cry that betrayed her.

“Great was the horror and amazement on the schooner to find that a native child had been taken away, and a chief’s daughter at that. There was no help for it. It was too late to put back. The captain swore at the mate, and the mate swore at the men, but it was finally decided to take proper care of Sae and restore her to her people on the next voyage. The little culprit stood among them, trembling at her fate ; but they could all understand enough Samoan to learn that she had come out into the great world in search of Avia, and she somehow touched their rough hearts, and they proceeded to make a pet of her, much as if she had been the ship’s monkey. She was not at all afraid of them, after a few moments, and uttered her little *Talofa alii ? —*”

“‘How are you?’ That is what that means,” explained Hester, trying not to be just a little proud.

"To every one that came near her, just as she would to a stranger on the way, at home. In half an hour she had told them confidentially all about herself, and in another half-hour was deep in the traditions of her store. As she saw the sunset reddening the water, she told the watch the Fila-oma's story of the reason for it; and when the round moon swung up in the balance, she was telling about the woman and her baby and her mallet and her board, that they might see in the moon by looking. There was a great famine in the land, she said, for a war had ruined the cocoa-nuts, the yams had not yet grown, the bread-fruit was not ripe, and even the taro failed. One evening, at the shore, a woman named Sina was beating out bark to make mats and tappas, and had set her baby in the water, where it was too feeble even to splash. She stood facing the east; and just then the moon rose, round and full, and to her hungry eyes it looked like a great immortal bread-fruit. 'Why don't you come down,' she cried out, 'and give my baby a piece of you to eat?' At which the moon, angry at being taken for anything to eat, *did* come down, and took her up, and there she is to-day, baby and board and mallet and all, as anybody can see. Of course the sailors were delighted with this little story-teller, and would have kept her telling stories forever, but for an incident that happened presently.

"This petting of theirs, as you may suppose, was very pleasant to little Sae, but none of it soothed the

pain that now burned at her heart as she looked out over the waste of waters and saw that she had lost all the rest, and had not found Avia. In spite of her desire to find Avia, she began to feel a great dread of the unknown country to which she was hastening. She thought of her poor mother, who by this time had missed her also, and was wandering about in trouble; she thought of her tall sister, who was learning all the things that now perhaps she would never learn, studying at the mission-school books that told her of the great happenings on the wide earth; she thought of the dancers gathering in the squares, the swaying figures of the girls, the voices of the singers on this moonlight night, — on the dark nights none ventured from the door except by twos and threes; she thought of the way in which her people were wont to turn night into day, of the young girls clothed in flowers, with wreaths and garlands and necklaces and plaited scarfs of the splendid blossoms of the islands wound about them, beautiful objects, delightful to the eye; she thought of the gayety when a whole village rose to go and visit another village that came out to meet them and received them with songs and dances and banquets, when the visit was finished the people passing to the next village, which received them in the same joyous way, entertaining them for days, till they again passed on, going thus till they had made the tour of the islands, sometimes taking a year to do it, and by the time they returned to their own place, an-

other village coming to visit them in this life of perpetual festivity, flowers, and song, and warmth. With every wave over which the vessel bounded, Sae felt that she was going farther and farther from all the joy of the earth."

"Oh, I know just how she felt!" said Hester, with tears in her eyes.

"All at once, as she sat there sorrowing, the cry came, 'Ship ahoy!' and, swinging round to the other point of her compass, Sae became alive with interest and curiosity in the manœuvres of ropes and sails and the lowering of a boat. It was late; the moon was riding large and full, — the refulgent moon of the tropics; you could have seen every ripple on the water, every bubble of the foam in the wake of the boats that drew together from the two vessels, every black line of cordage, sparkling with dew, of the ship that had been blown by a storm a good way off her course, and that now lingered but a moment while her boat went out to meet the *Petrel's* boat, and send to her owners in America word of her master's death. While the boats were approaching each other the mate of the *Petrel* was looking through the captain's glass, and, partly in idleness, partly in play, — for there was not the strictest discipline on the little schooner, where half the men were owners themselves, — he held the glass to Sae's eye as she hovered near him. At first she could see nothing but a dark blur, a gray haze, when suddenly started up

a part of the great ship before her eyes, with every line distinct, and then the glass swung a little as the vessel rolled, and the boat, with its flashing oars and every face of every soul within her, for just one instant hung painted on the field of sight. There was a wild cry ringing over the deck of the *Petrel*, 'Avia! Avia!' And in the next breath came a rush, a dash, and the little dusky figure had bounded overboard into the water, had come to the top, and was putting out swift as a bonita and dark as a cuttle-fish. Then she was in the moonlight; the phosphorescent water glittered about her; her little dark body shone with silver lines while she seemed to rise from a hollow and spring into the next surge, as a child springs into its mother's bosom. In that one moment Sae had seen Avia's face in the bow of the boat, and comprehended that he was perhaps returning to the Samoa which she was leaving. What was the water to her more than the air? Did she not almost live in it? Afraid of those lazily rolling waves? She would be a poor islander if, by dint of swimming and shouting, she could not get on board of the ship that carried Avia, and that doubtless meant to touch at the Samoan Islands before winging its farther way! Nor was the thought of any awful sea-monster able to terrify her, — that would be the most cruel and awful of possible monsters which could keep her from Avia. And if she failed to reach him — that did not once occur to Sae.

"For a moment every one on board the *Petrel* was paralyzed; and then another boat was launched and

manned and was following the child with mighty strokes. She was clinging to the gunwale of that boat, when both the others, not understanding the new movement, came toward it over the long roller. There was a brief interval of wild terror for the child, lest Avia's boat were returning to the ship without her, — the ship that seemed hanging back only like some impatient charger, — and then that too had come alongside. There were hurried words and cries. 'Oh, Avia! it is Sae! it is Sae!' she was exclaiming, in the sweet Samoan; and while she said it she was being drawn over the side, and she was sobbing in Avia's arms as the boats parted. She slept, still sobbing in her dreams, in his little brown arms that night, as the great ship sped on to touch at the Happy Islands, and on the next morning the two little runaways together were sobbing in the arms of their mother."

"Oh, Miss Park! dear Miss Park!" Hester exclaimed, as the young teacher closed the book, "you have made me so happy! I feel as if I had been at home again!"

And here the bell rang for them to come in, before the study hour began, and be treated to cake and ice-cream, in honor of Miss Marks's birthday; and Hester, with all her other learning, learned how ice-cream tastes, after all.

CHAPTER XII.

HESTER sat on the bank, the afternoon following the lecture on the South Sea geography, as Marcia called it, waiting for the tide and her swimming-class together. She was sad; for she was thinking of her father, and wondering over the possibilities concerning him,—whether he had not reached home at all; whether he had written, and the ship carrying the letter had never come to port; whether he had himself been wrecked, and was lying—oh, dreadful thought!—at the bottom of the sea, or were cast away on some barren reef, half starved, and signalling every passing sail; whether, indeed, he could have forgotten his little girl in her home-sickness.

Somehow,—and she felt as if it were very selfish—that last was as bad a thought as any, and Hester's tears fell fast over her fingers, as she

absently picked the pebbles. Her dear father, — no, she knew he never could have forgotten her. How tender he had always been with her; how he had had to be father and mother, too; how many nights had she gone to sleep in his arms, lulled by the soft sound of the sea on the reefs; how kind were his tones, how she loved them, how she longed to hear them! What had he ever refused her? What had he seemed to think of or to live for but her happiness?

And he had left his business, and given up her company, and brought her here over sea and continent, that she might not grow up like the little islanders, but might have, as other Christian children have, the benefit of all the world's enlightenment. And if now he were gone, what was there she could ever do for him in return? And then the tears came faster.

Only one thing could she do! She knew what a happy dream of his it had been that the islanders, whom she loved so, out there on the summer seas, should become as thoroughly civilized and educated as American and European people are; and only those who cared for them would make the

effort to bring that about; and she would spare no pains to learn all she could be taught in order to teach it in her turn to the islanders, for his sake, if for no other reason.

But the voices of the girls, led by Miss Park, disturbed her reverie; and Hester, watching the water a little while, presently slipped away into it, followed by Marcia and all her young nymphs.

"Say, Hester," whispered Marcia in her ear, rising and shaking the water out of her red locks, "will you take your revenge on Peggy Payson now? Let me pull her down by her heels and frighten her out of her wits. We'll have no more of her 'imperence,' I guess."

For answer, Hester pulled Marcia herself under, and they went shooting beneath the water like a couple of young naiads, and came to the top blowing like a couple of young porpoises.

"How do you like it yourself?" cried Hester gleefully. And then she swam back to show the girls, who were still floundering about near the shore, how to make their strokes more gracefully, and so lend their bodies to the water that, while they really ruled the waves it should seem as if the

wave ruled them, as it rules the long ribbons of the sea-weed.

“What in the world is the matter with Brownie?” cried Marcia, dashing the water from her eyes as she rose beside her again with Bella, — for Marcia had helped to make Bella quite expert. “Look at her, the absurd thing!” And, to the admiration of the girls, Hester stood up in the water a minute to look at Miss Brown, who was on the bank, slapping the palm of one hand with a letter which she held in the other, while Miss Park was calling Hester’s name.

“Oh,” cried Hester, scattering the water in all directions, “she has a letter for me! It is a letter from papa, a letter from papa!”

“Hester’s heard from her father!” cried Bella, with her mouth full of water.

“Oh Hester, I’m so glad!” exclaimed Marcia.

From whom else could the letter be? Hester forgot all about the swimming-lesson, and pushed her way eagerly towards Miss Brown.

“I don’t suppose she can wead it,” said Miss Brown to Miss Park, “any more than the learned seal;” for Hester’s little black head, sleek with the

water, suggested the comparison. "And the handwriting of the superscription looks as if a fly had cwept out of the inkstand and cwawled over the paper."

"Don't talk so, Miss Brown," cried Hester rather imperiously,—she could not stamp her foot in the water,—“don't talk so about my father's letter!"

"I shall talk as I please!" exclaimed Miss Brown. "And as to the letter, I don't know from whom it is, and I don't know whether you've a wight to it or not," as Hester hurried up the shore in her long, clinging gown. "You've a gweat many demerwits on my book. And I didn't bwing it down to give to her either,—I thought Miss Marks was here," she said to Miss Park.

"It does n't make any difference who is here! My letter belongs to me!"

"Well, let's see you get it," said Miss Brown, more and more angry, as usual.

"Oh, Miss Brown, it's from my father!" cried Hester. "I must have it!"

"Must, miss? I've a gweat mind not to give it to you at all, with your 'must' to me!"

"Shame! shame!" broke from half the throats of the swimming-class in a safe chorus, only to make matters worse.

"Oh, Miss Brown!" cried Hester breathlessly, and clasping her hands, "it can't be right for you to keep it from me! I know Miss Marks would give it to me!"

"Take it, then!" said Miss Brown; and with some force she gave it a flit towards Hester. "I don't imagine it's from your father at all. It's not like his witing in the visiting-book, any way!"

And then, just as Hester would have laid hands on the letter, the gentle evening breeze was before her, and caught it and fluttered off with it and let it gently down upon the water, out of reach of the girls, who went good-naturedly but too officiously splashing and splattering after it.

"I should just like to know how Miss Brown is going to explain that to the principal!" said Bella. But Hester did not waste a thought on Miss Brown; she was in the water in an instant, diving in order to come up where the letter was; but when she rose the letter was not there,—one little wave had washed it to another, and, wet

with all the commotion that the girls made, it had gone into the deeper water, and, in spite of all her swimming about and diving in search of it, the letter never reappeared.

“Oh! oh!” she exclaimed, wringing her hands, and coming up the shore at last, tired out as the twilight bell sounded. “I feel as if I had lost my father! She said it was n’t his writing,—it may have been to tell me I *had* lost him. And now I never, never shall know!” And she sat down on the sand in her wet gown, with her knees drawn up and her head bowed on them, crying as if she had broken her heart. “After all these months!” she said, — “these long, long months! And I was trying to be so good! Oh, papa! oh, my dear, my dear!” And here two strong arms closed about her, — for Marcia, the moment that the search for the letter was abandoned, had run up to headquarters to report the case,—and Miss Marks was carrying her away to her own room, and consoling her as only love can console the grieving.

CHAPTER XIII.

“HUSH, now, Hester!” said Marcia. “I did n’t mean you should know anything about it; and you never would, if your eyes were n’t everywhere at once, like the old woman’s hens!”

“I could n’t think why you and Bella were braiding your hair so finely. I can make lovely plaits, — like our island women’s plaits!”

“Oh, do, Hester, do! Oh, if you will, Hester, I’ll tell you all about it. I’ll tell you the greatest secret, — only you must promise never, never to betray us.”

“Of course I never will!” answered Hester indignantly.

“Solemn true, black and blue?”

“Upon my word and honor!”

“Well, then, Bella and Charlotte and I, after every one’s asleep to-night, are going to get out of

the windows in our bathing-suits — there's a splendid moon — and swim out to the Long Point. And Joe and Paul are going to row over from the parson's place, — they've bribed the under-gardener. Joe put a note in my hand as we were coming out of church yesterday. What do you think of that?"

"Why, you'll get your death o' cold!" cried Hester, without any thought just then as to the impropriety of the thing, first and last, in church or out of it.

"Oh, no, we shan't. The water's as warm!"

"But it's dangerous. There's a great current round the Long Point, you know —"

"Oh, you go away!"

"And such an undertow!"

"Nonsense! We'll leave the water, and be upon the sand and climbing across the ledge, before we get where the current is."

"I don't believe any of you can swim quite well enough."

"Don't you!"

"But if you should be drowned, — oh, Marcia! if you should be drowned, what should I do?" cried Hester, "and what would all your children

do at home? Your mother would have so much trouble, and the little baby —”

“Oh, Hester,” said Marcia, turning the subject, “do you know what they’re going to name the baby? I forgot to tell you. They’re going to name it Hester! I only heard to-day.”

Then Hester had to laugh, and then to cry a little on Marcia’s neck, and then they had to talk the baby over, and Hester tried not to let two little red spots on her cheeks betray her pride and pleasure. But for all that she presently returned to the charge. “But, Marcia,” she urged, “Miss Marks would n’t let you swim out.”

“Of course she would n’t, you little ninny! Do you suppose we’re going to ask her?”

“And it’s against the rules!”

“There aren’t any rules about it. ’Twas an offence never contemplated, as Miss Marks says of parricides and Lycurgus.”

“But you know it’s wrong.”

“Now, will you just tell me what there is wrong about it, Hester Stanley?” said Marcia.

“It must be wrong if Miss Marks would n’t let you do it,” said Hester, with the red on her dark cheek. “Please, don’t, Marcia.”

"I shall! So there!"

"Well, I'm sorry you told me the secret —"

"You're *not* going to tell of us now, Hester?"

"No; I promised. But—but—I can't plait your hair for *that*. You know I can't."

"Well, I don't suppose Joe and Paul will look at our hair much; the less they look at my gory locks the more I'll like it. Won't it be larks,—oh, such larks!"

"Don't you really think you'd better think better —"

"What queer language, Hester!" said Marcia, with dignity. "'Better think better.' It may be the Polynesian tongue —"

"It is the English tongue. And you shouldn't talk so to me, Marcia. And there are almost as many Polynesian tongues as there are Polynesian islands."

"Well, there, you dear little thing, I won't. And don't you bother! Just as like as not we shan't go, after all." And Marcia began to figure away on her slate again. "I wonder if Margaret Payson can demonstrate that horrid problem yet. I can't," she said presently. "Heigh-ho! Thank

goodness, it's most dark. See — look there, now! I wonder if Brownie's been outside that window all this time."

Hester was not quieted by Marcia's "Just as like as not." Yet, having resolved not to shut her eyes after the dormitory lights were out, but to rise and follow the girls in their naughty escapade, that she might be near in case they met with any danger, she fell asleep immediately on touching her pillow, — that is, as soon as she had said a prayer for her little Hester Meyer, — and was only awakened, by the moon on her face, to a vivid sense that they must have gone long ago.

A stealthy exploration assured her that the three beds were indeed vacant. Without a second thought she crept down the stairs as she was, fearing at every step — and never did the stairs creak so — that she would hear Miss Brown's awful voice. Then she let herself out a lower window, ran down the terraces and the garden and along the sand as fast as she could scamper, a little awed by the cold white moonlight and by the unreal shadows of all things as she ran.

Once or twice her heart failed her. She thought

of the other girls asleep in the still, soft beds, with the moonlight on the window-panes, and she had half the mind to go back. She felt as though she were all alone in the world except for the uncouth shapes of the rocks at one side, with the weird white moonlight on the lonely sand, and the dark water always curling in-shore. And then she thought of Marcia getting into that undertow, and ran on. "Oh, it's so awfully dangerous!" she kept saying to herself. "How could they plan to do it?"

The moon went under a cloud. How dismal, how desolate, it was then! She cried as she sped along. She was not really afraid either of shore or sea, for if she came to water through which she could not wade, why, then she could swim; but it seemed as if she were travelling through some dismal part of "Pilgrim's Progress," that Miss Marks had given her to read, after she had told about Rafe's reading it to the children. She had no right here, she was breaking the rules; but how could she break her promise not to tell, and how could she leave Marcia to her fate? And then, when a person has a baby named for her, a person must be brave and strong.

She left off crying and began saying a short prayer of her father's. Then all at once it seemed to her as if sky and sea and shore were full of the great Protecting Power, and she were safe as if lying in her little bed. Presently she had passed the boundaries of the shallow swimming-cove and its skirting line of rocks, and she must either climb and work her way across the great semicircle of the long ledge full of black cracks into the bowels of the earth, for all she knew, or choose the shorter way by swimming across to the Point; and she took the deep water and swam boldly out, sure of herself, but very doubtful concerning her wrong-headed pupils, whom she half feared to find drowned and floating before her.

It was only a little way, after all; but after a couple of rods she felt as though the current would be growing stronger than herself,—the water was not like the soft currents that played round her islands,—and she turned and made for the rocks, having swum but a few boat-lengths, and clambered up them, palpitating, and wondering over the fate of the girls, and hardly daring to

hope that they had done just as she had, and were now sitting with Joe and Paul cooking clams at a blazing driftwood fire on the other side of the Long Point.

"Oh Marcia, Marcia!" cried the little dripping figure, climbing the rocks in the moonlight and gaining the top of the bluff, "where are you? where are you? I don't dare to call! Oh, what ever made me love you so?"

As well as she could, for the uneven surface and its fissures, she ran along the top of the low bluff that at its extreme point ended in a sheer straight rock over which the waves washed in angry weather, although now, some six or eight feet below, they slept peacefully as any unruffled inland lake.

As she stood for a moment in the light on the extreme seaward part of the bluff, trying to wring out a little of the water that made her single garment so heavy, something that had been crouching in the shadow rose beside her so suddenly that she cried out and started back, and Miss Brown—who had been lying on her face peering over the side of the bluff that looked down on the sandy

shore where Joe and Paul, with Marcia and Bella and Charlotte, were roasting their clams, the serving-man whom they had bribed sitting at a little distance — threw herself forward to catch the startled child; and crying, "Aha, miss! So I've got *you*, at any wate!" lost her balance, tottered, and fell with a wild scream into the sea.

A second passed. No, the tenth part of a second, — but it seemed like an eternity to Hester. It was Miss Brown, the hateful, horrid, unaccountable Miss Brown, who had pursued her with anger and spite, who made her life wretched, who had lost her father's letter, who was her bitter enemy, — what should she do?

There was only one thing to do. And in another heart-beat Hester, with a cry as wild as Miss Brown's, was in the sea too, and had reached the drowning woman, and had caught her by her long black hair as she came to the top, and was keeping her from sinking, or trying to do so, when the boat, with the serving-man and Joe and Paul in it, appeared, and Miss Brown was being dragged ashore, while Hester held on the gunwale till her feet felt the hard sand, for there was not



"Bella and Charlotte and I, after every one's asleep to-night." — PAGE 169.



"Hester was in the sea too, and had reached the drowning woman." — PAGE 176.

even the usual roller in the placid land-locked bay.

"Are you going to tell of us, Miss Brown?" asked Marcia, as soon as Miss Brown was a little restored; for that lady had not become insensible, for all her sudden bath.

"What a widiculous question!" said Miss Brown, with nearly her ancient vigor, and although her teeth were chattering in spite of the warm night, as she sat upright, after a little. "To be sure I am! Do you suppose I cwept out over all the black seams and fissures in those wocks, on my hands and knees, and in danger of my life, for nothing?"

"Well, then," said Marcia, shrugging her shoulders, "there's several of us, and perhaps we may as well make an end of her. It's a pity you would n't learn to swim, Miss Brown!"

The boys laughed, and even the serving-man grinned; but Hester, shivering as she was from head to foot with nervousness and reaction and sudden chill, felt herself grow hot and red with anger and shame. "Marcia, Marcia!" she cried out.

"Don't you fwet, Hester," said Miss Brown. "When I get up to the Hall, I'll soon make an end of her, so far as Waterways is concerned."

"Oh, Miss Brown," said Marcia, well scared, "as if one could n't have a little fun!"

"Well, you've had all the fun you'll have to-night. You, sir," turning to the serving-man, "take those boys home to Mr. Marquand diwectly! You are a bad man, if there ever was one, to betway your master and help these boys do wong, if you did help me ashore. If you had n't helped them here, I should n't have *needed* to be helped ashore. As for the boys, no decent boys would be guilty of such behavior, and they will not be allowed inside our doors again. These young ladies — be quiet, Miss Meyer!"

"Miss Brown, I *will* say this, if you *kill* me! Hester was n't with us. She would n't help us. She stole out after us, like a goose, for fear we'd be drowned. As if she'd have been 'any good, if we were!"

"She was good enough to save *my* life," said Miss Brown, "which is worth more than the whole thwee of you, in my opinion, and I shan't forget it

in a hurwy. I suppose you'll everwy one have the doctor to-morwow. I never knew anything so outwageous and impwudent. March wight before me now, diwectly!"

"Can't we swim, Miss Brown?" asked the Irrepressible,—for Charlotte and Bella were entirely subdued, and in tears.

"Swim! If you go into the water again this year, it will be because to-night is a dweam. No! You will cwawl over all the holes and cwacks in the wocks, just as I did. As for you, child,"—to Hester,— "I shall mark out all your demerwits and forgive you!" And Hester felt it was all that could be expected of Miss Brown,—as we almost always either dislike, or feel we must forgive, those we have injured. And then Miss Brown marshalled the girls before her, Marcia giving a backward wave of her hand to Joe all the same; and presently she increased their pace into a run where the way was plain, helping Hester over the dark and dreadful gullies between the rocks, where the child half feared to see the head of some sea-monster glancing, and finally reaching the house all glowing with the rough exercise.

"I'm glad you're all so warm and wosy," said Miss Brown, surveying them under the swinging lamp that burned all night. "But if the punishment were allowed in this school, I would make you all warmer with a good tingling switch!"

"Miss Brown," said Marcia, stepping up bravely, "I know we've been shameful, and I think we ought to be punished, — but — but — you know justice is best tempered with mercy!"

"You go wight to bed, you impertinent young sauce-box!" cried Miss Brown. "And, Hester, you go to the bath-woom and give yourself a bwisk wubbing. There's the bell stwiking one o'clock! It's perfectly scandalous!"

"That's the last of the prize!" whispered Marcia, as they slipped away together. "That delightful little watch has gone up beyond our reach. We're counted out. Just think of Peggy Payson's virtuous airs! We shan't hear any more about to-night, though. Tell? Oh, of course she'll tell! She'll bring in a verdict of guilty, with a recommendation to mercy, and Miss Marks will read us Jephthah's daughter, or Herodias's daughter, or the centurion's daughter, or —"

"Oh, Marcia!" sobbed Hester, "I'm afraid you're going to be a very bad girl!"

Marcia looked at Hester, and skipped along a few steps, turned to look at her again, and then ran back and threw her arms about her. "I'll never say another naughty thing as long as I live, you poor little image!" cried Marcia, in a burst of repentance and tears. And Miss Brown, who had heard it all, did n't say a word, when she parted the curtain of that dormitory alcove, and saw Hester and Marcia saying their prayers together, on their knees beside Marcia's bed that night, whether it was against the rules or not.

CHAPTER XIV.

TERM was to close in a fortnight ; and what a busy time that fortnight was ! What with the reviewing of exercises, the rubbing up of half-forgotten lessons, the rehearsal of exhibition parts, the making out of records, it seemed as if such an orderly and industrious hive were never seen. More than once Miss Brown was heard to exclaim that she wished it was always two weeks before term-closing, in spite of the heat.

But then Miss Brown herself was going about with a smile on her face that nobody knew how to account for. "I should think she had been made over," said Marcia, who had not yet learned the humanizing effect of happiness. "But there," she added with a sigh, as if it cost her a pang, nevertheless, "I promised Hester I would n't say anything naughty again, and I suppose I must keep

my word. What a nuisance a conscience is! It seems as if everything I wanted to say was bad."

As she spoke, she was tying her broad white sash over her white muslin gown; for, foolishly sensitive about her red hair, which she did not know it was the fashion for poets and artists to admire, Marcia would never willingly wear any bright colors, and this was the great day of all when every girl was fain to look her best.

"What do you think, girls?" she said. "I want you to look for yourselves, and see if Margaret Payson has n't made a little pocket for that watch in her gown. I hope to die, if she has n't! Dear, dear, I wish there'd never been any prize offered, — it's going to make us all so envious and ill-natured."

"Some of us were so before," said Fanny Doane.

"Oh, certainly," began Marcia, turning on her, but whisking away and clapping her hand on her mouth. "There I go again!"

"I don't feel envious about it," said Bella. "I'd just as lief — almost as lief — you had it, March."

"Well, I had n't as lief you had it. I can't be as good as the rest of you, and it's of no use try-

ing. I'd like it myself. It makes me angry to think I might have had it. However, I don't suppose any of us three would have got it, if we *had n't* gone out to the Long Point. So I'm glad we've had *that*, any way!"

"I would n't be glad, Marcia," said Hester, in a low tone.

"Why not, pray?"

"It was wrong. And it nearly killed Miss Brown, and — and me. And just think if it had!"

"I'd never have had any peace again. Should I?"

"And it lost the man his place, I suppose. And it disgraced the two boys so that I don't believe they'll be allowed to come —"

"You're a regular little missionary, Hester. You have n't mistaken your calling. But it's no use; you can't make anything out of me. I should n't wonder if I was really good for nothing. I ought to be sorry. I know it was wrong. But — but — we had a good time!"

"There go the bells!" said Charlotte. And presently the white-clad lassies were filing into the great audience-room that was already crowded

with the trustees and the invited guests, the selectmen of the little town beyond, and the school-committee-men, the fathers and mothers and friends of many of the girls, and Mr. Marquand, and his tutors, and all his boys, not forgetting Joe and Paul, who had contrived to get a front seat, close to the platform.

How warm the air was! How delicious was the breath of the innumerable flowers with which the room was hung! How like flowers themselves were the fresh young faces of the girls! How sweet were the clear voices that sang the hymns! How glibly Margaret Payson rattled off her theorems and her chemical formulas, and how proud of her was Miss Brown! How furiously Hester's heart beat when Marcia, who knew the whole Latin Ode by heart, tripped and quavered and paused, and turned red and redder, and would have made an ignominious failure, if a sharp, swift whisper from Joe had not struck her ear and sent her safely forward!

Years afterward, when Hester was a woman of wealth and authority, at the head of a corps of teachers, bringing her islanders up into the light, as she called it, and coming every few summers to

visit Marcia and Joe, she remembered that terrible moment when Marcia hesitated and paused, with all that swarm of faces, and that breathless silence, save for the fluttering of the fans, waiting on her words. Her heart did not beat half as fast, nor was the moment anything so terrible, when she herself went up for a reading-exercise with the "Sea Fairies."

The lessons had all been recited at last, the essays read, the topic discussed, the duets played, the valedictory delivered with all Margaret's best dignity and grace; and then, as the trustees and a few other gentlemen went upon the low platform, Miss Marks herself came forward there, to meet them, and to deliver the prize.

She also wore white muslin, with a good deal of lace about it. What a perfect-looking thing she was, Hester thought, as she watched her slow and gracious ways; St. Theresa ought to have looked just so, as Marcia had often said. If that little gold band in her gold hair were only just outside her head instead, like the halo in the pictures, then she could n't help looking like a saint. And while Miss Marks was speaking, Hester had become lost in all these fancies, and started as if she

had been stung—sure she had been doing something wrong—when suddenly Miss Marks spoke her name.

“Oh, if you please—I did n’t know—I won’t again!” she was half whispering, half saying aloud, thinking it was all because of her wandering attention. Then she stopped in dismay, seeing Miss Brown edging her way towards her, and nodding to her like a Chinese mandarin at the door of a tea-store. The concluding sentence, however, of what Miss Marks really said, was this:—

“And so, in view of all the circumstances, of the fact that when she came she could not write at all, and now writes freely and well; could read only with difficulty, and you have all heard in what manner she reads now; had never committed to memory from a printed page, and has never failed in a recitation; possessed an unlimited pride, and has become so humble that she will be more astonished than any one when her name is called; had a wild and uncontrolled temper, and has acquired such mastery of it that she makes no retort to sneers and takes no revenge for abuse; not to speak of the fact that she endeavored to save the life of one whom she felt to be her worst

enemy at the very moment of injury, — in view, then, of her general excellence in deportment and scholarship, as she reaches in both the rank of one hundred, where nobody else reaches ninety, I adjudge the prize to — Hester Stanley.”

And then Miss Brown was whispering to Hester, and beckoning her, and lifting her, and pushing her, and Miss Park was leading her, and she was standing on the platform before Miss Marks and those gentlemen, and Miss Marks was holding out the watch and chain to her, — Hester Stanley.

“Oh, if you please,” said Hester again, looking up for half a second and speaking in a low and hurried voice, trembling from head to foot, and her cheeks stained like an autumn leaf; “you can’t mean me, you know! It is n’t I at all —”

“Indeed, I do mean you!” said Miss Marks loudly and clearly. “Most assuredly it is you! And the watch is yours.”

But Hester shrank back as she would have thrown the chain around her neck.

“Oh, don’t you be vexed with me, Miss Marks, dear Miss Marks!” she said; “but you know I couldn’t take it. It does n’t belong to me. It’s a dreadful mistake! I don’t believe you remem-

bered that I'm only in fractions, and the big girls are —”

“My dear child,” said Miss Marks, “that has nothing to do with it. Spherical trigonometry is as easy to the ‘big girls’ as fractions are to you. And you are perfect in fractions, and they are not perfect in trigonometry.”

“It is the similitude of the laborers in the vineyard at the eleventh hour,” murmured one of the trustees, — the fat one behind whom a tall, dark gentleman was standing, and blowing his nose like a trumpet.

“Miss Marks,” said Hester, then firmly, but in the same low voice, looking straight before her, for all that multitude of circling faces seemed to her like the clouds of cherubs’ heads in Miss Marks’s engravings of the Madonna, and she knew it would be just the same at the Judgment Day, “I beg your pardon, but you know I shall never take the watch. A little dunce like me! I should feel like a thief. And I know you don’t wish to make me unhappy.”

Miss Marks laughed, although she was disturbed. “Very well!” she said, after a moment’s thought, while all the audience were still as if it

were a scene at a play. "I see that you are in earnest, and I will not distress you; but the watch is yours. That I cannot hinder. And as you do not seem to think good behavior and perfect recitations of such worth as to deserve a prize, you may give it to that young lady whose mere scholarship you know to be the best. I leave it to you." And she put the watch in her hands.

Hester hesitated still, and looked up at Miss Marks once 'more, with her great dark eyes as appealing as a dumb animal's. "Must I?" she said. And Miss Marks bowed.

Then Hester turned and looked at the girls. These had been her friends; those had jeered her; she did not think of that.

There was Marcia turning red and white with excitement; and Marcia did wish for it so, and she would so like to please her sick mother now that it was too late perhaps; and Rafe would be so glad; and she herself longed so to hold it out to Marcia; and she so hated to let her rival triumph over her!

Hester looked at her again; and then the great tears swelled and gushed over her eyes.

"Oh, I want to give it to Marcia!" she cried.

"I want to give it to Marcia! But the watch belongs to Margaret!"

And she extended her hand to Margaret, who was on the spot almost as soon as her name was uttered, and who bent her long, white neck to the glittering chain, coolly adjusted it, and slipped the watch into the little pocket that had been waiting for it, while a slight ripple of proper applause ran through the general audience, and the girls, admiring her self-possession, and forgiving all her ill-nature, for the time being, in consideration of her success, clapped their hands till it sounded like the flight of a flock of doves from the roof.

And then Hester, running to take refuge from her conflicting emotions with Miss Marks, felt herself clasped, half-way, by something very different from Miss Marks's embrace, and with a wild, glad cry, found herself in her father's arms.

"He'd been wrecked," said Marcia that evening to her own select audience, the evening being given them before they parted for the long vacation; "he'd been wrecked and cast on an island, and lived on shell-fish, in spite of all his princely possessions in the South Seas, and taken off at last and brought into Valparaiso —"

"Hester's father had!" exclaimed Charlotte.

"Yes, and he had that letter sent, that letter which Brownie flirted into the water, to tell of it; and he was taken ill and couldn't follow it before."

"Did Miss Marks know he was there, I wonder?"

"No, indeed. He sat behind the pillar, and Mr. Globe, who is as big as the gates of Gaza, stood before him on the platform. I rather think he cried a little; he was using a handkerchief as big as a flag of truce. Does n't he look like Hester?"

"Mr. Globe?"

"Pshaw! Mr. Stanley. He said that to find Hester what she is, to be present at that scene, was worth all he had suffered. The little dear! Did n't she want to give the watch to me? The little Brutus! I declare, to see her father take her in his arms was prize enough for me! For, do you know, I really think Margaret Payson deserved the watch. She's delved for it, while we've played. She preferred the watch, and we preferred the play. So that's all square."

"Well," said Bella, "my average, taking behav-

ior in, is as good as Margaret's. But I suppose she *is* the best scholar of us all."

"And was n't the whole thing just in character for St. Marks? And did n't I always tell you what she was? She's like Providence, that cares for a sparrow as much—as much as it does for me!" cried Marcia, with her gayest laugh. "I'm so glad I'm coming back next year; perhaps she'll make a saint of me before she gets through with me. She's a saint herself!"

"Well, if she's in that business," said Bella, "I wish she'd begin with Miss Brown!"

"Oh, I forgot!" cried Marcia, springing up and dancing about the room. "Say! Do you know Brownie's sister is coming here to teach,—the lame one? St. Marks is going through that whole Brown family, just because nobody else will! And now you may have one guess apiece as to the reason why she's coming. I declare, I've just the best thing to tell you, the very richest thing! You'll never guess,—it's better than a prize, any day. Did n't she look nice in her gray silk? And has n't she modified? Well,—what do you think? Brownie's going to be married!"

She really is, — married to Mr. Marquand. He says he never saw such devotion to duty as hers that night at Long Point. And so St. Marks has seen the last of her, — for of course she's going over there to live. Poor Joe and Paul!"



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